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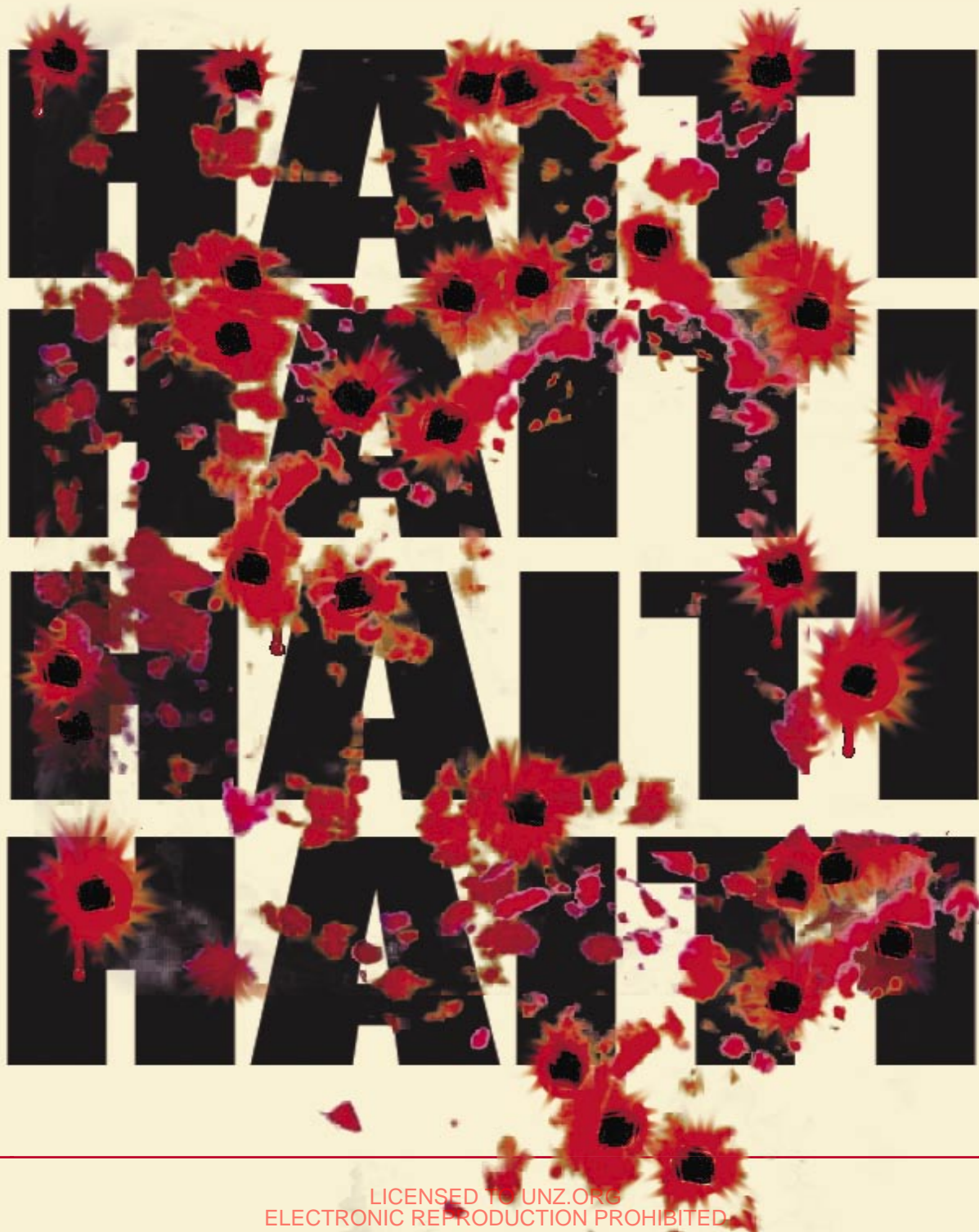
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“President Bush. Strength and confidence.
Steady leadership in times of change.
He knows exactly where he
wants to lead this country.
And he won't let facts, circumstances,
or the Constitution get in his way.”

WILLIAM SALETAN
SLATE.COM, MARCH 4, 2004

TERRY LABAN



Editorial

Campaign of Shame By Joel Bleifuss

With John Kerry as their de facto nominee, Democrats now are in a position to marshal their efforts to put Bush out of office. But between now and November 2, Kerry and the Democrats will

have to overcome several foreseeable obstacles.

Democrats go into this election as the financial underdogs. The Kerry campaign has raised an estimated \$40 million, while the Bush campaign has taken in an estimated \$150 million. This Republican funding advantage will allow Bush to buy many more television advertisements and consequently reach many more people.

To counter this, independent organizations critical of Bush have been buying air time and running their own advertisements. For example, MoveOn.org has run an ad that shows a lie detector oscillating sharply as Bush makes claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.

Yet, MoveOn.org has had trouble getting its ads on the networks. CBS refused to run another MoveOn.org ad during the Superbowl. (Perhaps the network thought it was tasteless.) And ABC and Fox as a matter of policy refuse to run so-called advocacy ads.

The Kerry campaign also will have to contend with Republican dirty tricks. This is a party that has lied its way into war, exposed the identity of a CIA agent (Valerie Plame) to punish her husband, and pilfered

computer files of Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee (see "Watergate Redux" on page 6). Already someone has used Matt Drudge's Web site DrudgeReport.com to accuse Kerry of adultery and to circulate a doctored photo of Kerry and "Hanoi Jane" Fonda. More surprises are sure to come.

In the fall we can expect the television debut of "DHS: The Series," a reality-fiction drama about two Homeland Security Agents, both Christians. Producer Joseph M. Medawar told the *Boston Globe* that "DHS" will "educate the public through a series taking two agents [who] put themselves on the line to serve this great country of ours and to protect us from the threat of terrorism." The show's stars include, among others, Bush and Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, both of whom contributed sound bites.

Yes, the Republicans will pander to people's fears in order to win this election. Democrats should expect this and be ready to counter it. A recent Republican campaign ad, touting "steady leadership in a time of change," features Bush, the attack on the Twin Towers and firefighters carrying a corpse draped in the red, white and blue.

Victim's survivors are upset that their tragedy is being exploited, particularly in light of the fact that President Bush has refused to testify in open session or under oath before the commission investigating 9/11. Kristen Brietweiser, who lost her husband in the attack, told the *New York Daily News*, "After 3,000 people were murdered on his watch, it seems to me that takes an awful lot of audacity."

Those of us who don't want to see another four years of Bush should send a clear message that money can buy a lot of things, but it can't buy the votes of an enlightened citizenry. It is time to begin thinking of the upcoming election in stark terms: people working for the common good fighting in the electoral arena against people who use fear and intolerance for political gain.

National Public Radio recently aired a commentary that put it this way:

We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. ... We will not walk in fear. ... We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it, and rather successfully. Cassius was right, "The fault dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

That was not a critic of Bush speaking. It was CBS's Edward Murrow talking about Senator Joseph McCarthy, 50 years ago, on March 9, 1954. ■

Letters

Contempt of Court

As a local resident who has been following this story, I am writing to express disgust at your "Appall-o-Meter" piece on the three Orange County children whose false accusations put a homeless man in jail for eight months (March 15). You gave the girls credit for recanting; in fact, one of them finally acknowledged the falsity of the claim to her mother, narrowly averting probable conviction. In the event of conviction, the falsely accused man reports that he had developed a plan to kill himself rather than face the violence routinely meted

out to convicted child molesters in state prison. The term "pokey" hardly suggests the physical hardships and risks in what you flippantly call "county accommodations," as the brief indifference to the diabetes care of the briefly detained girl suggests. It is a hard question whether publicly arresting these girls was a good idea; denial of access to parents and counsel and disregard for the medical needs of one of them clearly were not. Yet the real victim—Eric Nordmark—got lost here. Your coverage not only minimized the gravity of the



girls' conduct, but reflected a contempt for the liberties of people who are poor and/or unconventional, an indifference to false imprisonment, and a hostility to civil rights litigation which I do not expect to find in a progressive magazine.

*Maureen Graves
Irvine, California*

Look Closer to Home

My union, AFSCME, has an unfortunate history of bad bets ("Endorsement up for Grabs," March 15). Our leaders chartered a fleet of Washington-bound buses to protest the Gulf War, despite the war's hearty support among membership. Those buses should have gone to Harrisburg to protest state job cuts.

Our leaders foolishly weighed in on Pennsylvania's Democratic gubernatorial primary—against Philadelphia's very popular Ed Rendell. Rendell won handily. Now Pennsylvania state AFSCME members not only don't enjoy the governor's gratitude, he denies us a post-election sit-down.

Our leaders have recklessly presumed our local remains solidly Democratic. Most of us no longer live in Philadelphia. With 20,000 abandoned homes and 19,000 empty lots among formerly middle-class row-houses, the tax base is shot. Schools have gone from dangerous to laughable. Empty office towers sport banners proclaiming new life as "luxury condos," as though the world's supply of rich people remains never-ending and all are eager to migrate to this dog of a town where once-exclusive shops are Rite-Aids or Kinkos.

Yet, our union blithely persists in sending out mailings—at 37 cents each—telling members residing in surrounding states how to vote in Philadelphia mayoralty elections.

Tip O'Neill maintained all politics are local. Instead of AFSCME president-for-life Gerald McEntee deciding what our nation's two-China policy should be or whether the Israeli barrier is a fence or a wall,

www.inthesetimes.com

DISCUSSION

"It's disgraceful that President Bush bemoans the decisions of 'activist judges' in the United States who make their decisions based on the tenets of the Constitution, yet would never think to complain about those judges who blatantly disregard the Supreme Court in order to push forward their own moral agenda. Even worse, I'm pretty sure half the country is worried now about these 'activist judges' and how they are all going to tell us how to live."

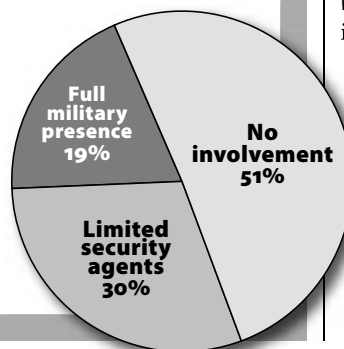
"This country's laws are enacted by the elected representatives of the people. The courts, including the Supreme Court, are not in the business of governing, nor do they have the right to govern, the people."

Join the debate at the online forum for "No Romeo."

POLL

MOST RECENT How involved should the United States be in the crisis in Haiti?

Cast your vote or discuss at www.inthesetimes.com/polls



Jobs Key to Election

Thanks for David Moberg's great article ("Jobs Not Well Done," March 15). I am a man in my early 40's, I have worked 10 years as a chief information officer for various companies, and I have been out of work for two years.

I not only voted for Bush in 2000, I campaigned hard for him. I have voted Republican all of my life, but will vote Democratic in November.

Bush has turned his back on Middle Americans. The record speaks for itself. People are out of work, the budget deficit is met with disdain and we have botched foreign policy. Most importantly, we have sent brave young kids to fight a war that, in the end, seems to be pointless.

George W. Bush will be remembered as one of the worst presidents to ever hold office.

*Tracy Vance
Atlanta*

he ought to be learning Farsi or Urdu to organize neighborhood Wal-Marts.

*Emile DuGrenier
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Three Cheers for Kurt

It is always a bright spot in one's life to hear from KV and Kilgore Trout ("State of the Asylum," March 1). Many times, they can see what others cannot. It has always struck me as odd how concerned we are about electability, when in 1999, our current president was about as electable as Pat Paulsen, God rest his soul. George W. Bush had no concept of countries or their leaders, or even policy. He thought the Gaza Strip was the adhesive side of a maxi pad. If that guy wasn't "electable" then, what makes him electable this time around? Tutoring? Face it, Bush isn't fit to be Commissioner of Baseball and if Pat were still alive, he would be a better choice. The Republican National Committee has stated this is going to be one of the nastiest campaigns in history. It'll have to be! The incumbent can't run on his record.

*Mohammed Alasma Id
Washington, D.C.*

Mr. Vonnegut: We are in desperate need of another book by you. As a college student, and as a person, I'm tired of hearing about *The Da Vinci Code*.

The best thing about your books is that they are not just

some trip, some sort of escapism. They wake the reader up.

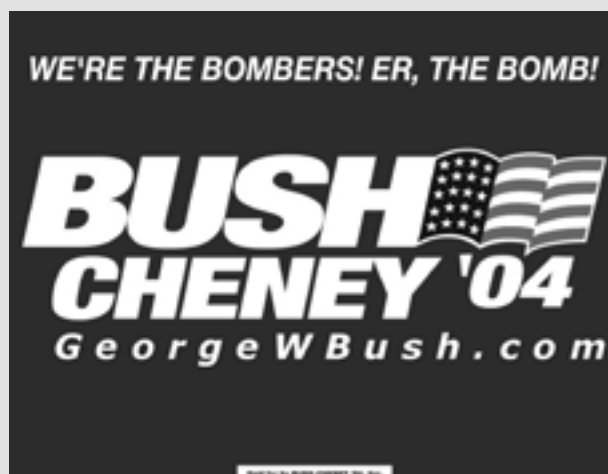
We've been asleep for the past few years. Wake us up again.

*Franco Vitella
Detroit, Michigan*

Kurt, isn't it time that the well-known dissenting voices embraced an evolution in their roles in this society? Rants are good—and wonderfully entertaining—but let's step it up a notch! Help us organize, get on board, comment together and

actually make some change that isn't lip service. I am one of the many people in need of a blocker to follow through the line. I understand if this doesn't jive with what you perceive to be your role, and maybe I'll come off as a lazy turd who should lead instead of follow, but I think my feelings are very indicative of a genuine need.

*Colby Mischevsky
Galveston, Texas*



Minutes of Fun

"Farmers and Ranchers," "Young Professionals 4 W" and "Arab Americans" are just a few of the "Coalition Groups" the Bush-Cheney '04 Web site encourages to customize its campaign posters (www.georgewbush.com/btl/CustomPoster.aspx?type=color). The *In These Times* "Staff Coalition" had a few ideas of its own (see above).

Beware: Some words are forbidden, like "bomb," "we suck young blood" and "end times." We figured a way around this, but since then they figured it out, too. Those bastards.

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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- 11 Greg Palast tells you how to steal an election.



Watergate Redux

Calls mount for investigation into Republican staffers' piracy of Democratic files. *By Christopher Hayes*

THE SENATE JUDICIARY SEEMS POISED TO RECOMMEND further, possibly criminal, investigation of pilfered Democratic computer files to the Department of Justice (DOJ), after a report by the Senate sergeant-at-arms revealed that at least two Republican staffers inappropriately accessed more than 4,000 records during an 18-month period.

As *In These Times* went to press, committee members were still wrestling over which course to pursue. Some Republicans indicated a desire to take the unusual step of asking the Secret Service to decide whether the matter warranted a criminal investigation, while Democrats pushed for a special prosecutor to be appointed. A likely compromise would be a recommendation that the DOJ open a criminal investigation.

It seems unlikely that the matter will be dropped. At a March 4 press conference following the release of the sergeant-at-arms report, Committee Chairman Orrin

Hatch (R-Utah) said he was "mortified that this improper, unethical and simply unacceptable breach of confidential files occurred."

The scandal broke in mid-November after excerpts of internal strategy memos appeared in the conservative editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Times*, which both claimed to be shocked that liberal advocacy groups were communicating with Democratic senators on President Bush's judicial nominees. Democratic staffers demanded an investigation when they realized the files had come from their private directories. Hatch, recognizing the severity of the transgression, assented.

Shortly thereafter, Manuel Miranda, a 44-year-old former aide to Senators Orrin Hatch and Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), admitted that he and another staffer (later named as Jason Lundell) exploited a security lapse to view Democratic committee staffers' files. Miranda resigned in February,

calling the investigation into who leaked the documents to the press “ridiculous and a great waste of government resources.”

The confession prompted a wave of outrage from committee Democrats. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) compared the document theft to Watergate, and even Republicans on the committee seemed surprised at not only the brazenness with which the pilfering took place but the lack of remorse evinced by Miranda afterward.

Melanie Sloan, a lawyer who worked on both the House and Senate judiciary committees and now serves as executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington says Miranda’s breach would severely damage the working atmosphere of the committee. “When I was there ... this kind of thing would have been unthinkable. People were genuinely really shocked. They weren’t like ‘Well what can you expect?’ because this is so beyond the pale.”

On March 4, the Senate sergeant-at-arms, charged with investigating the memos, released its findings in a 67-page report that detailed how Miranda and Lundell, a clerk in the Nomination Unit of the committee, obtained the files.

Lundell became aware of the security lapse after seeing that a new system administrator working on his computer had neglected to change the default permission setting for new directories from open to protected. This meant that all personal directories of staffers, Republican and Democrat, created under his tenure were accessible to anyone.

After the discovery in 2001, Lundell “printed approximately 100-200 pages of documents pertaining to Judge [Charles W.] Pickering’s nomination,” and gave them to a senior Republican committee staffer, the report noted. Two days later, the report says, the same staffer “admonished him not to use the Democratic documents and ... shredded the materials he had given her.”

Miranda, however, directed Lundell to comb through memos and, as e-mails included in the report show, ordered specific files. Nonetheless, Miranda maintains he did nothing wrong because there was no “hacking”—that is stealing of passwords or password evasion—to meet the standard of “unauthorized access” necessary for criminal prosecution.

But Joseph Metcalfe, a professor of law at the University of Oregon and former federal prosecutor specializing in computer crimes, disagrees. “Federal law prohibits intentionally accessing a computer without authoriza-

tion or in excess of authorization,” he told *In These Times*. “It most certainly does not require hacking. If you access a government computer when you aren’t supposed to and obtain information, you’re potentially in violation of federal law. Simply because there’s a weakness or security hole doesn’t mean that exploiting that weakness isn’t criminal. A burglar is guilty of burglary even if the front door is unlocked.”

The criminal implication of Miranda and Lundell’s actions is just one of the many questions that remain. It is still unknown who leaked the documents to the press, how many Republican staffers accessed the documents, and whether any documents are still in possession of Republican committee members. In early March, a former intern for Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) revealed that he and other Grassley staffers knew of the breach. And in a statement released upon his resignation, Miranda said, “I knew that other Hatch counsels and staff came to know about the glitch and that some had concluded that the access was not unlawful.”

In his final interview with investigators, Miranda said he recently received a backup disk from a friend with the files in question but refused to name that person or others who might have copies. It’s also not known whether the memos were shown to or discussed with staffers from the DOJ or the White House counsel’s office, which both regularly coordinate judicial nomination strategy with Republicans on the committee. The DOJ delayed making one employee available to investigators in regular communication with Lundell.

Despite the condemnation from fellow Republicans, Miranda, who maintains that the real scandal is the “collusion” between senators and liberal advocacy groups, remains defiant. “The only mistake here was not making 50 copies of [the files],” he says. “Whoever got them out should have made 50 copies and tied them in a blue ribbon and distributed them at a press conference.”

Eight months before Election Day, the White House already is facing one investigation and grand jury testimony over the administration leak that outed CIA operative Valerie Plame. It hardly can afford another wide-ranging inquiry, and with Miranda candidly detailing his activities and ratcheting up his rhetoric, he just might make the perfect fall guy. ■

CHRISTOPHER HAYES writes on politics and culture for *In These Times*.

IN SHORT

Bad Grades

Has the Department of Homeland Security made the United States less secure? Yes, according to a report released in March, given that some areas are “worse than before the DHS was created.”

The report by the Century Foundation, a New York-based research group, gave the agency an overall grade of C+ for its first year of operation and found significant management problems that are limiting the department’s effectiveness. The report stated, “The longer these issues fester, the worse the problems can become—and the greater the chance that they open the door to terrorists.”

The department’s four missions—intelligence, aviation security, immigration, and coordination with state and local governments—also were evaluated separately. The report found that civil aviation systems are still very vulnerable. The Transportation and Security Administration estimates that there is a 35 percent to 65 percent chance that terrorists plan to place a bomb on a plane, yet only 5 percent of cargo is screened and many controls continue to be voluntary.

The coordination of intelligence, the strongest argument for the department’s creation, is still unresolved. The department is playing only a marginal role in collecting and analyzing intelligence and has been “only one player—the junior partner, at that.”

The US-VISIT program, which uses fingerprints and photographs to verify identity, has not halted undocumented immigrants from entering the United States. Application filings fell by 25 percent in fiscal year 2003, but by October 5.4 million remained unprocessed. “No significant new steps have been taken to prevent or deter the flow of undocumented immigrants across U.S. borders,” the report found.

The department also has failed to coordinate with state and local governments as planned because of its inability to get appropriated funds to first responders around the nation. The report states that money is being distributed “more on the basis of pork than on the basis of need.”

—Daniel Hughes

Chávez Escapes Recall

But the Venezuela opposition escalates its tactics. *By Steve Ellner*

THE PETITION DRIVE TO RECALL VENEZUELAN President Hugo Chávez was stopped short March 2 when the Electoral Commission (CNE) invalidated more than 876,000 signatures. The commission accepted more than 1.8 million signatures collected in late November (see "Recall Fever Spreads South," January 19), but the petition ended up 603,590 short of the 20 percent of registered voters required for recall.

The CNE granted the opportunity to revalidate the signatures, but spokesmen for the opposition argued that any procedures violated were minor in nature and did not imply organized manipulation.

Even before the CNE decision, opposition leaders initiated the "Guarimba Plan," in which small groups blocked traffic and burned trash on key avenues in Caracas and other cities. Street damage in Caracas

alone, according to Infrastructure Ministry estimates, reached \$1 million in the first week. In addition, armed bands of opposition organizations, including the ex-leftist guerrilla Red Flag, hurled Molotov cocktails and attacked the National Guard—violence that police in areas controlled by opposition parties refused to stop. Henrique Capriles Randonski, mayor of a wealthy Caracas suburb and opposition party leader, said police were right not to interfere because protesters were doing "nothing less than exercising their legal right to protest."

In an ironic twist, because the disruptions mainly occurred in affluent urban areas, those opposed to Chávez have been inconvenienced most. Gas stations in Caracas' wealthy zones, for instance, were closed because of risk in delivering fuel. But the possibility of escalation leading to a busi-

ness-decreed civic strike looms large. Shortly before the CNE announcement, pro-Chávez trade unionists met in Caracas and threatened to put into practice the slogan it raised at the time of the general strike: "A closed company is a company taken over."

The current showdown is the third in two years. In April 2002 a two-day coup ousted Chávez, and that December the opposition spearheaded a 10-week general strike. Chávez has confronted opposition parties, the business organization FEDECMARAS, labor leaders, the Church hierarchy and, more recently, the United States. Chávez has prioritized the poorer classes both in his rhetoric and actions. Last year he initiated a series of Missions that established literacy, grade school and university programs in the poor communities. These programs, attacked as "populist," increased Chávez's popularity among the poor. According to pollsters Consultores-21 and Datos, Chávez's support tops 40 percent, although his backers claim an even higher rating.

Members of the opposition have alleged human rights violations during the conflict. On March 4, they marched in Cara- ➤

Smear Campaign

Fear and suspicion in El Salvador. *By Paul Brohaugh*

SAN SALVADOR—THE people of El Salvador will vote March 21 in the most polarized presidential election since the tiny Central American country's 12-year civil war.

In 1992, the Salvadoran government signed peace accords with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) that transformed the FMLN from a left-wing guerrilla movement into a legally recognized political party. The president who signed the Peace Accords and the two presidents in succession have belonged to the Republican Nationalist Alliance party (ARENA). This year's election will be the first in which the FMLN has a real chance of capturing the required 50 percent of the vote. U.S. Assistant Secretary of

State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega, has expressed concerns about an FMLN government. During a February 6 visit, Noriega canceled plans to meet with FMLN candidate Schafik Handal, referring to the "history of this political movement," which as a guerrilla force fought against U.S.-financed troops and death squads. "Salvadorans should judge what type of relations this movement can maintain with us," Noriega said.

ARENA candidate Tony Saca is 10 to 20 points ahead in the polls, yet the Salvadoran right still seeks to discredit the 73-year-old ex-guerrilla leader Handal. Major Salvadoran newspapers and television stations have published declarations against Handal. Right-

wing foundations are taking out anti-FMLN advertisements that accuse Handal of kidnapping civilians during the armed conflict and warn that the "communists" will destroy the country's freedom and economic progress.

ARENA Congressman Guillermo Gallegos questions whether the FMLN has fulfilled its commitment to the 1992 Peace Accords. "We don't know if the guerrillas have turned in all their weapons," he said. President Francisco Flores (ARENA) also suggested that the FMLN might be distributing firearms to youth gangs to generate violence on Election Day, a contention the FMLN rejects as absurd. Web journal *El Faro* recently reported that Flores, at a forum of Central American presidents, said the FMLN can't win the election because "a system of life" is at risk.

Salvadoran Human Rights Ombudswoman Beatrice de Carrillo said the right-leaning upper class is promoting a campaign of fear against "the monster of communism."

"If the FMLN wins the elections, it will be the first time in Latin America that a former guerrilla movement gains a presidency via democratic elections," she said. She also expressed doubt that the United States would allow this to happen.

In late February the FMLN requested that the United Nations verify results of the elections. According to FMLN coordinator Salvador Sanchez Cerén, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) has not responded to the party's multiple denunciations of campaign violations. The TSE supervises elections and is swamped with charges of electoral violence and dirty campaigning from both parties. Hundreds of independent international observers will be accredited by the TSE to monitor the elections and many already are meeting with local electoral committees, political parties and social groups. ■

PAUL BROHAUGH is an election observer in El Salvador, where he lived from 1999 to 2002.

APPALL-O-METER

0.4 Watch Those Mouths

Having failed rather embarrassingly to spring a Lewinsky redux on John Kerry, cyberspace libel merchant Matt Drudge searched pretty hard for another exposé that would fix the candidate's wagon—and his effort paid off (this time Drudge bothered to check the facts). "The Drudge Report can reveal," the guardian of decency panted

portentously, that John Kerry's official Web site—get ready for this—"is riddled with obscenities." Yes, a Drudge investigation discovered no fewer than five "fucks" and three "shits"

embedded on johnkerry.com. Sure, all of these curse words were found in magazine and newspaper articles posted on the site, but a couple had fallen straight from the senator's lips (e.g., his remark to *Rolling Stone* to the effect that President Bush was "fucking up" in Afghanistan).

We may wonder if such a ruffian is fit to lead a civilized nation. So much more is the case with Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela. This blackguard has assigned highly inappropriate epithets to our own nation's leader who, Chávez ungenerously suggests, has had a hand in coups against him and other elected leaders in the hemisphere. George W. Bush, the Venezuelan strongman proclaimed at a huge rally in Caracas, is an "asshole." Evidence may support this contention—"bigtime" so to

speak—but we expect better manners from world leaders.

5.2 Life in the Red States

To the South's list of peculiar institutions we may add the hog-dog rodeo. WBRZ, Channel 2 in Baton Rouge, explains that the events center on combats staged between feral swine and dogs (usually pit bull terriers) that have been trained to hunt them.

The rodeos are well attended throughout Louisiana and other states, observers say, but not everybody has found them quite sporting. The hogs have their tusks

pruned with a bolt cutter to protect the dogs, and perhaps as a result bear the brunt of the combat. Rodeo enthusiasts claim there is no blood let in the fights, but neighbors have complained that slain pigs have been buried near their property.

Louisiana law does not prohibit hog-dog fights, and Channel 2 reports that a sheriff and a district attorney have investigated the events and found everything to be on the level. They're just concerned that no minor drinking goes on. Animal rights people decry the practice as cruel. And one organizer of a rodeo in Feliciana Parish defended the fun as "no more cruel than calf roping." No dogs have been hurt, said Charles "Chuck" Harris Jr. "It's probably not healthy for the hogs," he allowed, "but people are going to hunt them and kill them anyway."

—Dave Mulcahey



The Venezuela opposition has resorted to burning trash in the streets of Caracas.

JUAN BARRETO / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

cas to protest 300 illegal arrests and called on the Organization of American States and the Carter Center, who are observing the electoral process, to condemn the state's repressive actions.

Since the open confrontations between government supporters and opposition began three years ago, both sides were able to count on roughly the same number of followers on the streets. But following the defeat of the general strike in early 2003, the situation changed and more recently the Chavistas called two marches of an estimated 400,000, which were unmatched by the opposition.

The second of the two recent Chavista marches was held February 29 to protest U.S. intervention in Venezuelan affairs. In his speech, Chávez denounced the generous funding of opposition groups by the notorious National Endowment for Democracy. Close to the podium a papier-mâché piranha represented the United States; nearby was a small fish representing Venezuela.

Some observers, including *Miami Herald* journalist Andres Oppenheimer, interpreted Chávez's speech as a provocation against Washington in

order to deflect attention from the recall and to justify further radicalization.

Chávez went on to deny that he was a Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. Indeed, the Venezuelan armed forces solidly backs the government, as disloyal members have left or have been forced out as a result of the April coup and the subsequent general strike.

Members of the opposition are convinced that what is happening demonstrates Chávez's hostility toward democracy, just as the Chavistas are certain that the opposition attempted to commit "electoral megafraud." In this atmosphere of mutual distrust, a middle ground among national leaders is completely lacking. The situation is aggravated by a private media that has converted itself into propaganda organs of the opposition, just as the state TV channel defends everything the government says and does. In such a setting, it is hard to imagine peace and stability in the months ahead. ■

STEVE ELLNER is coeditor of *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era: Class, Polarization and Conflict*, which will be released in paperback in April.

China's Nuclear Ties

White House downplays reports that country gave weapons plans to Pakistan. *By Jehangir Pocha*

BEIJING—DOCUMENTS declassified March 6 indicate that while President Bush was crusading against Iraq's mythical nuclear program, three other "axis of evil" countries—Libya, Iran and North Korea—were building nuclear weapons that could reach New York using missile designs provided by Pakistan and China, both of whom are U.S. allies in the war against terror.

The documents, dating from 1965 to 1997, reveal that "China provided assistance to Pakistan's program to develop a nuclear weapon capability" and stalled U.S. investigations through deceptions, false promises and lies. And even today, the CIA cannot confirm that China has cut illicit nuclear ties with its client states.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, investigating Libya and Iran's illicit nuclear programs, already has said they were based on Chinese technology provided through Pakistan.

By Bush's own definition this should crown the China-Pakistan axis as the most evil of them all. Yet the White House is trying to dismiss China's violation of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty as a momentary lapse that belongs to the past.

Undersecretary of State John Bolton, the top U.S. arms control official with close political links to the White House, flew to Beijing two weeks before the declassified documents were released and declared that Beijing is now cooperating with the United States to prevent proliferation.

Despite Bush's "I-will-protect-



America-at-any-cost" mantra, the administration knows it can't get too tough with China and Pakistan. Sino-U.S. trade stands at \$150 billion, and China is funding a substantial part of Bush's \$1.5 trillion deficit by holding almost \$350 billion in U.S. treasury bills. Bush also needs China to keep a lid on the fracas his own bluster has created in North Korea. And in Pakistan, President Pervez Musharraf remains indispensable in the war against terror.

But doubts remain about whether China is taking U.S. nuclear concerns seriously. Just four days after the declassified documents were released, Beijing announced that it would help Pakistan build a new nuclear facility at Chashma in the Punjab state. Washington had opposed the deal, particularly as Musharraf is only midway in his effort to cleanse Pakistan's nuclear establishment of rogue scientists.

China says the Chashma plant is civilian and does not break a 1996 promise made to President Bill Clinton that China would

end all assistance to nuclear plants not under international safeguards. But the CIA has consistently said that China has not adhered to the promise.

Some sources allege that Beijing facilitated the supply of nuclear technology to North Korea via Pakistan as recently as 2002—when Bush was asking Beijing to join Tokyo, Seoul and Moscow in pressuring Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program.

In late 2002, Western intelligence agencies caught Pakistan flying nuclear weapons technology to North Korea in exchange for ballistic missile parts. Less publicized was the fact that the planes, Hercules C-130s, could not have flown from Islamabad to Pyongyang without using Chinese airspace. Some intelligence sources say the planes refueled at the Lanzhou military base in central China.

It is possible, even likely, that the Bush administration is using behind-the-scenes arm-twisting (in the case of Pakistan) and parleys (in the case of China) to address these concerns. But

Washington has a long history of prioritizing more immediate economic and security interests.

The declassified documents reveal how Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush certified to Congress that China had not assisted Pakistan in acquiring nuclear capability, even when they knew this was untrue.

Bush is likely to come under pressure to get China and Pakistan to come clean on their illicit nuclear activities. The international community will want to know how the clandestine network was built and run and who its third-party associates were. Unless this is done, the network could be revived and the rogue middlemen involved could resume their trade. The presence of Chinese nuclear technicians in Myanmar already is causing concern in security circles.

"An investigation by China into its proliferation would be a great victory for transparency, [but] Beijing is more likely to sustain the secrecy surrounding its decisions on the Pakistani nuclear program," said William Burr, director of the National Security Archives' Nuclear Project Documentation center and one of the people responsible for getting the documents declassified.

If China resists an inquiry, some say the United States and European Union, which already have arms embargoes in place against China, should expand those to cover dual-use technologies and pressure Russia into joining the effort.

But the most important thing, says a Western diplomat familiar with Beijing, is that the West needs to change its mindset.

"We need to accept that for now these countries are not our friends," he says. "They may be allies of convenience and we can do business with them. But we need to look to countries like India, Indonesia and Japan to secure our Asian interests." ■

JEHANGIR POCHA writes from Asia for *In These Times*.

Investigative journalist Greg Palast has several new projects: a DVD, a CD, an updated edition of his bestselling book and a new investigative fund. He recently talked with *In These Times* about these and more. Go to www.inthesetimes.com for the entire interview.



There's a new Palast Investigative Fund, suggesting you're in trouble again. What's up?

There are two lawsuits I'm dealing with. Just before Mr. Bush left office at the request of two-thirds of the American people, he changed the rules for gold mine claims, allowing one corporation named Barrick to lay claim to a \$10 billion gold mine, the biggest in the United States, and pay the U.S. Treasury \$10,000. They then gave President Bush a lucrative job as their senior international advisor. Barrick got the gold mine, the public got the shaft and Poppy got the job. The company said in suing my paper, the *Guardian*, that any reasonable person reading these facts would



give me a penny toward my endless legal defenses. The problem is it's made it harder for me to keep putting in my personal savings to subsidize the undercover work and research work. That's what I'm asking people to support.

Does this protect you personally from future lawsuits?

The important thing is that the work is protected, that it continues to be funded no matter how much they attempt to sue me. And of course they can't sue my fund, so it will keep the work going no matter what they do to me.

You've said that the Bush administration will steal this year's election. How so?

There is something called the Help America Vote Act that our president signed a year and a half ago. As soon as the Bush family tells us they're going to help us vote I get very nervous. And sure enough, it is filled with expanding the purge of voters they did in Florida. Instead of eliminating that racial voter pogrom, they're going to take it on the road nationwide. The second thing they're going to do is provide billions of dollars to force states to computerize voting. They did a test run when Katherine Harris put touch screens in Broward County. In the black precincts the computers went down, and thousands and thousands of black votes were never counted. Here's the bottom line: In 2000—I'm working with Chris Edley of Harvard Law School on this—1 million black people cast votes nationwide and didn't have their votes counted. So the non-count of the black vote is a serious racial problem.

First Amendment Problem

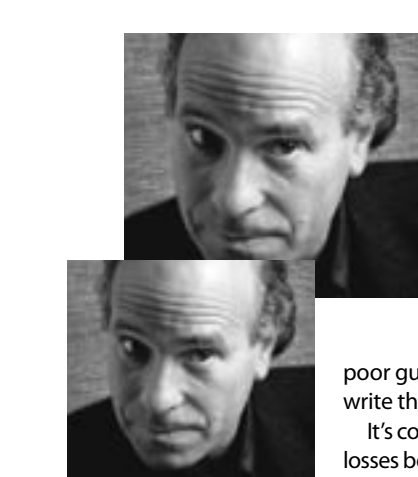
By Cynthia Moothart

How did you arrive at a million votes?

Actually, it's the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and the Harvard University Center for Civil Rights. We know 2.9 million votes were cast and

not counted in 2000. In black-majority precincts you see that one in five votes will not be counted, whereas in the white counties one in 60, one in 70 won't get counted for some technical reason. Doing a simple regression analysis it's figured one in seven black votes is not counted in the United States. And that's about 10 times the rate of non-counts for white voters. If you proportion that against the actual numbers of non-counts, it comes out to one million seven thousand votes cast not counted in 2000. People are over-focused on the ability to hack into the machines and change votes from Democratic to Republican. The biggest danger is the strategic breakdown of machines that will cause the non-vote in strategic precincts. That's what happened in Broward, where the machines were first tested. That's what will happen nationwide. Watch. ■

To read Palast's work, to donate to his investigative fund or to place an order, go to www.gregpalast.com.



conclude that they're connected. So I've gotta say they're not connected.

Mario Cuomo is suing me because he didn't like the way he was portrayed in a single sentence in the book. Actually, it's a single word that he's upset about. All I can tell you is that he's suing in the United States where he's got a problem called the First Amendment. He's ready to blow Thomas Jefferson's head off

Mount Rushmore just because the poor guy wrote the First Amendment. I didn't write the Bill of Rights, why blame me?

It's costing a fortune in suits, tremendous losses being incurred to maintain an operation to do serious, old-fashioned, sleuth-work investigative reporting. And therefore, I've set up an investigative reporting fund, a not-for-profit foundation that will support this work. I'm not asking anyone to



Back Talk *By Susan J. Douglas*

Bushettes: It's a Bad Thing

Did Martha
lie? Looks
like she did.
Is Kenneth
Lay still
enjoying
one of his
five homes
in Aspen?
You bet.

AH, THE DREAMS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT. We envisioned a day when there would be women in high places, and here we are, with a female national security adviser, a female Secretary of the Interior, a female Labor Secretary and even our latest female corporate felon.

Now, I've never been a fan of Martha. Her elevation of domestic chores to an obsession, the profusion, in her magazines, of those dictatorial images insisting that your house be a sun-drenched, voile-curtained, neat-as-a-pin showroom, and her smug condescension while trimming the rough edges off poached eggs, all made me long to throw a cream pie at her.

But like many, I see her prosecution and conviction as a cross between showboating by federal prosecutors and good old-fashioned backlash. Did Martha lie? Looks like she did. Is Kenneth Lay still enjoying one of his five homes in Aspen? You bet.

And there's more to it than just her being a celebrity. Martha's biggest crime, it seems, was to blur and confound the codes of gender in ways that have made a lot of men, and many women, uncomfortable. A woman who is an expert in hand-washing sweaters and folding napkins into the shape of flamingos is supposed to be nurturing, generous, innocent of ambition, focused on family. But Martha, even before the trial, came to be known as a tough, demanding, ruthless businesswoman who didn't suffer fools and wasn't particularly cuddly.

In a society where we police the borders of gender relentlessly, through clothing, gestures, behavior, language and activities, what are we to make of a woman who sells female domestication in a honey-hued voice but behind the cameras acts like what we expect of a tough-as-nails male CEO? Martha was an irresistible target not only because of her fame but because she seemed a housewife with way too much power. Worse, she was a housewife who got paid—a lot—for her labors, and a housewife who seemed greedy.

To emphasize that such a gender offender deserves whatever she gets, TV news reporters have slavered over accounts of how Stewart will be subjected to a cavity-search when she goes to prison. Has the viewing public been urged to imagine the same humiliation for Enron's Jeffrey Skilling?

At the same time, ironically, Team Bush has successfully used women, in cabinet positions and elsewhere, to make the administration seem female-friendly and egalitarian. To read more about this, run, do not walk, to the nearest bookstore to get Laura Flanders' terrific

new book, *Bushwomen*.

She begins with Katherine Harris, and other chapters are devoted to Condoleezza Rice, Karen Hughes, Ann Veneman, Elaine Chao, Christine Todd Whitman and Gale Ann Norton. Of the five female cabinet members she profiles, only one has children. The rest are simply unfamiliar with struggles faced by millions of mothers to juggle the demands of work and family. All have "benefited directly from feminism—the movement they now cast as women's enemy," writes Flanders, who chides mainstream women's organizations for failing to criticize the policies and actions of powerful women.

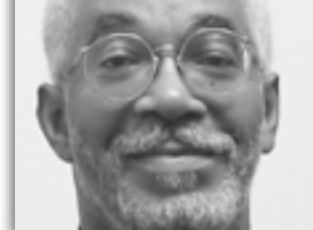
Flanders notes how sexist and racist conventions in the news media actually help make these women seem less powerful (and dangerous) than they actually are. For example, all you have to do is say "Katherine Harris" and one immediately pictures garish makeup and shellacked hair. "No one," writes Flanders, "was made more fun of in the media" and "no one did more, more carefully, to use the power of her public office to steal the presidency for her candidate."

Or take the endless pieces that have been written about Condoleezza Rice's childhood in '50s Birmingham, Alabama, and how she rose from there to success. A *New York Times* piece on Rice, for example, emphasized her hair, dress size and place of birth but "didn't discuss her views on national security until the twenty-seventh paragraph." No *Times* story so far has dwelt on Vice-President Cheney's youth as a white man in "pre-civil rights Nebraska," notes Flanders, writing that this news frame about Rice both "smacks of racism" and ignores what, exactly, she did after Birmingham.

The Bushwomen, writes Flanders, are "an extremist administration's female front" and if the corporate media took them more seriously "they wouldn't stand a chance." They have been used to mask the ongoing gender gap plaguing the Republican Party. Flanders reminds us that in 2000 Bush had an 11-point margin over Gore with men, but that he lost women by the same amount. Thus it is crucial for women to look beyond the cabinet window dressing and learn what these Bushwomen are really about.

The Martha drama and Team Bush's acute awareness of the gender gap ensures that gender will be front and center, if in often sneaky, subliminal and superficial ways in the coming campaign. Bushwomen and the Stewart conviction remind us how fatuous stereotypes keep us all in line and undermine women and the issues that matter to us most. ■

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Mass Media*.



The International Wrong

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS (CBC) seems to be the only governmental body concerned about the Bush administration's controversial role in the recent regime change in Haiti.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's duly elected president, charged he was the victim of a coup d'état February 29 that was aided and abetted by U.S. forces. "One could say that it was a geo-political kidnapping," he said, or "terrorism disguised as diplomacy."

Aristide made these charges in a statement broadcast on Pacifica Radio's "Flashpoints News" magazine following his arrival in the Central African Republic, after being spirited away from Haiti by gunpoint. He said U.S. officials in Port-au-Prince told him that he and his family were unlikely to survive attacks by armed rebels and that the Americans said "they will kill thousands of people and it will be a bloodbath," unless the family quickly boarded a U.S.-chartered plane into exile.

In the statement, which was the only communication he was allowed, Aristide revealed that on the night of the coup, "the national palace was surrounded by white men armed to their teeth," and it was clear to him that "we were already under an illegal foreign occupation [which was] ready to drop bodies on the ground, to spill blood and then kidnap me dead or alive."

This is damning testimony. Bush administration officials dismiss Aristide's charges, calling them "nonsense," and claim he left Haiti voluntarily. Still, Aristide's allegations seem increasingly credible as more information emerges about his abrupt exit and the odd location of his forced exile (the Central African Republic?). Except for the CBC, however, few in the United States seem interested.

And that's odd. After all, shouldn't all Americans care about charges that the Bush administration colluded with forces conspiring to overthrow a democratically elected leader? How much trust can this administration inspire if it praises democracy in speech while trashing it in practice?

"I demand that this administration explain how they allowed a democratically elected government to be overthrown by a group of heavily armed thugs," Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) said during a March 3 hearing of the House International Relations subcommittee. Waters was addressing her remarks to Roger Noriega, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, a man long dedicated to Aristide's removal.

"Roger Noriega has been dedicated to ousting Aristide for many, many years, and now he's in a singularly

powerful position to accomplish it," Robert White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador and Paraguay, was quoted in *New York Newsday*. White—president of the Center for International Policy, a Washington-based group dedicated to promoting U.S. foreign policy based on international cooperation, demilitarization and respect for human rights—said Noriega's rise was the result of ties to North Carolina Republican and former Senator Jesse Helms, an arch-conservative foe of Aristide.

Waters charged that Noriega pursued a policy that sought to undermine Aristide's government for many years and blasted the Bush administration for encouraging ties to the Haitian opposition. "I am especially concerned by the possibility that the U.S. government may have armed and trained the former military officers and death squad leaders who carried out last Sunday's coup."

Several other CBC members took turns questioning Noriega, often in aggressive and abrasive ways. They were angered by the Bush administration's seeming support for Aristide's opposition, even though it includes many unsavory characters. Observers unfamiliar with Noriega's history of hostility to Aristide may have felt a touch of sympathy for him. But Noriega's diffident responses to urgent questions about the Bush administration's Haiti policy were designed more to deflect controversy than provide real answers.

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), a founding member of the CBC, said the group of black legislators backs the call by CARICOM (the 15-member Caribbean Community) that an investigation into Aristide's departure is conducted urgently by the United Nations. "We have made it known that we are of the view that the United States facilitated a coup d'état and we want not just the U.N. to investigate but also the Congress," Rangel told the *Trinidad & Tobago Express*.

Those circumstances would be farcical were they not so tragic—and so redolent of Western imperialism. The colonial scenario of masters banishing insurgent subjects to far-flung exile is etched into Western history; Aristide's treatment is just a contemporary echo. There is little national concern being expressed about the Haitian situation because Aristide's treatment conforms neatly to the Western narrative about unruly colonial subjects.

For those reasons and more, the CBC's shrill objections to business as usual in Haiti are particularly welcomed and very long overdue. ■

How much trust can this administration inspire if it praises democracy in speech while trashing it in practice?

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

The Sludge Hits the Fan

The EPA's own Office of the Inspector General reported that the "EPA cannot assure the public that current land application practices are protective of human health and the environment."

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE MOST reporters aren't at work. On New Year's Day many people are in no condition to read the news.

This past New Year's Eve the Environmental Protection Agency took advantage of that media blind spot and denied a petition to ban the disposal of sewage sludge as land-based "fertilizer," but announced that 15 additional toxins found in sludge would be added to its list of nine heavy metals that are currently regulated.

Why the stealth announcement? If the media told the public about the dangers posed by sludge—the toxic byproduct of the nation's sewage treatment plants—they might demand that the practice be stopped. Were that to happen, the corporate polluters that pour industrial pollutants down the drain and the municipal sewer systems that process that waste would have a huge, expensive toxic waste disposal problem on their hands.

The Sierra Club defines sludge this way: "Urban sludges are a highly complex, unpredictable biologically active mixture of organic material and human pathogens that can contain thousands of industrial waste products, including dozens of carcinogens, hormone disrupting chemicals, toxic metals, dioxins, radionuclides and other persistent bioaccumulative poisons."

Formerly, a lot of sludge was shipped out to the ocean and dumped. When it became apparent that this practice was decimating the ocean's ecosystem, environmentalists, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, got the practice banned in 1992. But the problem remained: What is to be done with the mountains of sludge? It couldn't eas-

ily be sent to landfills, given sludge is toxic and dumping it *en masse* would create a proliferation of industrial waste sites that would then need to be regulated and monitored.

So the EPA came up with a novel solution. In 1993, with the help of a PR firm, the EPA renamed sludge "biosolids," and then defined biosolids as a fertilizer. Fertilizers, unlike industrial wastes, are only lightly regulated. Consequently, each year more than 3 million tons of sewage sludge—excuse me, "biosolids"—are spread over farms and wilderness areas.

Naturally this raises questions of whether sludge spreading threatens public safety. The EPA maintains that "biosolids" are safe. In a 1994 brochure, the agency bragged that rather than posing a health concern, sewage sludge may "protect child health" because a study found that animals that eat "biosolid-treated soil and dust may have a decreased absorption of lead into the bloodstream, thus lessening the potential for lead-induced nerve and brain damage."

Today's children ingest more sludge than you might think. Much of the bagged soil at the big home-and-garden stores, such as Home Depot, contains municipal sewage sludge. But you would never know that because the EPA has decided that sludge is harmless and companies are therefore under no obligation to notify consumers that the "dirt" they are adding to their garden is an unholy mixture of material that not so long ago passed through human bowels and down factory sewers.

Despite its constant assurances that sludge is safe, in March 2002 the EPA's own Office of the Inspector General reported that the "EPA

cannot assure the public that current land application practices are protective of human health and the environment." And in July 2002, the National Research Council, part of the National Academy of Sciences, reported that the EPA's 1993 sludge safety standards were based on an unreliable 1988 survey of hazardous chemicals. The NRC recommended that "additional scientific work is needed to reduce persistent uncertainty about the potential for adverse human health effects from exposure to [sewage sludge]."

This past New Year's Eve, the EPA responded to the National Research Council and said that it would begin the process of setting safety limits for an additional 15 chemical toxins found in sludge, bringing to 24 the number of poisons that will be regulated.

The environmental movement is split on the question of what to do about sludge. The Natural Resources Defense Council, the group that led the fight to get sludge out of the ocean but onto the land, does not oppose land-based dumping. It does, however, want sludge to be more strictly regulated, particularly when it comes to dioxin, a deadly man-made chemical found in sludge. Last October, after a five-year study, the EPA decided not to regulate sludge for dioxin.

On the other side of the regulatory divide is the coalition of 73 environmental and farm groups led by the Washington-based Center for Food Safety. Laura Orlando, the group's spokeswoman, put it this way:

Most large environmental organizations want regulation. They want to be players in the Beltway games and they can't be players

if there's no chit chatting about fixing this and changing that. Those of us who believe sludge is a hopelessly toxic material and will not settle for regulated poison in our farms and playgrounds have no reason to sit down at the table with EPA. I am glad NRDC is reminding us that dioxin is in sludge, it shouldn't be there, and that EPA ought to care. But the fight is not controlling dioxins in sludge, it is stopping the disposal of sewage sludge on land.

The coalition filed a petition in October asking the EPA to comply with its statutory mandate to "protect public health and the environment from any reasonably anticipated adverse effects" and ban the land application of sewage sludge. In its petition, the group marshalled "considerable anecdotal evidence that the land application of sewage sludge" has harmed people, livestock and the environment.

For example, the Cornell Waste Management Institute at Cornell University has compiled sludge-based health incident reports by 350 people who live in areas where sludge has spread. The characteristic symptoms include: asthma, weight loss, fatigue, eye irritations, flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal complications, headaches, immunodeficiency problems, lesions, nausea, nosebleeds, rashes, respiratory complications, abscesses, reproductive complications, cysts and tumors.

Further, three deaths have been attributed to EPA-regulated sewage sludge. In the petition, the coalition lawyers wrote:

In 1994, Tony Behun, an 11-year-old boy from Pennsylvania, became suddenly ill with skin lesions, fever and respiratory problems. He died from kidney failure four days later. Immediately before getting sick, he had ridden his bike through a mine reclamation field where sludge

was being dumped. In November 1995, 26-year-old Shayne Conner went to bed in his home next door to a field where sludge was land applied. ... He awoke with symptoms similar to Behun's and died a short time later. 17-year-old Daniel [Pennock] died in 1995 of a massive bacterial infection after walking on a field where sewage sludge had been applied.

The petition also notes that on June 24, 2003, a jury awarded the Boyce family in Burke County,



Georgia, \$550,000 in damages for the deaths of 300 dairy cattle that ate from pastures spread with Augusta, Georgia, municipal sewage sludge.

In the New Year's Eve letter denying the petition, EPA Assistant Administrator G. Tracy Mehan III wrote, "EPA examined the information provided in the petition, as well as other sources of information, and has found no evidence that exposure to land-applied sewage sludge was the cause of any of the allegations of adverse health effects or of the specific human and animal deaths cited by petitioners." Indeed, in his letter Mehan repeats 11 times that no scientific or medical evidence links any of these deaths to sewage sludge.

Microbiologist David Lewis, the world's leading sludge researcher and a former EPA scientist, disagrees. He has spent the last eight years studying the health effects of

sludge on humans. In testimony in February before the House Mineral and Resources subcommittee, Lewis said:

Growing numbers of people living near sites where the sludge is spread have reported bacterial and viral infections, some fatal, after contacting sewage sludge and breathing dusts blowing from the treated fields. My research at EPA and the University of Georgia showed that chemicals in processed sludge that irritate the skin and respiratory tract may make people susceptible to infections.

An overview of his studies can be found in the current issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, a peer-reviewed journal of the National Institutes of Health.

Lewis also charged that the EPA had denied the coalition's petition using unreliable data that came from an EPA and industry-documented research "white paper" that had not undergone peer review:

The EPA has completely politicized the scientific peer-review process, both inside and outside the agency. ... This whole process, of course, is nothing more than a scam. ... It is a scam run by program office managers who are not qualified as research scientists and whose official position descriptions require that they defend EPA policies. In this case, the same EPA officials who developed the agency's sludge policy are using the vast resources of the federal government to cover up adverse health effects and environmental damage resulting from the scientifically flawed policy they created.

Further, Lewis asked that the subcommittee address the issue of whistleblower protection. Last May, the EPA fired Lewis, a 31-year veteran of the agency, for publicly questioning the agency's assertions that sludge is safe. ■



HAITI'S DEMOCR

BY LARRY BIRNS

IN THE FALL OF 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide officially left his position as a parish priest to embark on an unanticipated political career. Within weeks he became the most popular president in Haiti's 200-year history. Aristide's Lavalas Party, meaning "flood," referred both to the near-universal applause of Aristide's fundamental tenets and the presumed cleansing effects it would have on remnants of the Duvalier dictatorship. Despite the country's Provisional Electoral Council's (CEP) approval of 11 presidential candidates for the 1990 elections, Aristide's surge in polls was overwhelming. He won the first free and fair election in the country's history with 67 percent of the vote.

Despite Aristide's exultant inauguration, threats remained in the form of the Duva-

liers' still-menacing band of supporters and their Praetorian Guard—the Tontons Macoutes—not to mention the cabal of military plotters who seized power after Baby Doc fled the country.

These groups, along with the country's traditionally dominant economic elite (1 percent of the population controls 45 percent of the wealth), feared that Aristide's radical agenda would curtail their opportunities for graft, corruption, drug trafficking and cronyism. They also were embittered by the CEP's rejection of key associates of the Duvalier regime, such as Claude Raymond and Roger Lafontant, as qualified candidates for the 1990 presidential race. (The CEP's action was based on the 1987 constitution's provision barring any Duvalier-era officials from running for public office.) Those scorned by this process, together with a large percent-

age of the country's severely compromised military, waited for the right moment to oust Aristide. This was accomplished in 1991 and again in late February.

The Bush administration, less through confusion than by design, sent troops into Haiti on February 29, all but guaranteeing that this deeply scarred society will soon recuperate. While the villains who helped bring down Haiti's constitutional rule will face the scrutiny of objective critics in the months and years to come, no reputation will be more tarnished than that of Secretary of State Colin Powell.

In effect, Powell let U.S. Haiti policy become the captive of two of the administration's most-obsessive right-wing ideologues—Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega (see "Smear Campaign," page 8) and White



DEMOCRACY IN FLAMES

House aide Otto Reich. The two are backed by a White House that is more-than-eager to please the right wing Latin American émigré community in Miami.

Reich, a Cuban exile, achieved infamy during the Reagan administration as head of the Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he employed Army psychological operations—psyops—specialists to try to convince the American public to support the U.S. backed Contras in their war against Nicaragua's Sandinista government. Bush nominated Reich to head the State Department's Latin American desk, but couldn't get him confirmed, so he hired him as a White House advisor. The job instead went to Noriega.

Powell's Haitian policy was dazzlingly inept. Only days before Aristide was put on a plane February 29 for his State Department-arranged flight into exile in the Central Af-

rican Republic, Powell repeatedly acknowledged the legitimacy of Aristide's rule and denounced the opposition's violent "thugs". He further insisted that they would not be allowed to shoot their way to power nor would Aristide be forced to resign. Once engaged, Powell began insisting that the anti-Aristide political opposition must negotiate with the government and that Washington would not sanction regime change or insist upon Aristide's forced ouster. Then, scarcely 24 hours before Aristide's State Department-scripted travel arrangement, Powell reversed himself and ignored Haiti's constitution, which stipulates that a president must convey his resignation only to the country's legislature.

If Powell really meant what he said, then why didn't he adhere to it? Aristide had done nothing to justify this 180 degree re-

versal in U.S. policy. Powell's rhetoric appeared to represent the high road on the issue, but he was either deceiving the public or being undermined by Noriega and Reich, who, in off-the-record briefings to journalists and other interested parties, made it clear that regime change was very much an option and that Aristide could be muscled aside in any negotiation process.

When it came to Haiti, Powell's defense of democracy was more apparent than real. To begin, the U.S. embassy in Port-Au-Prince was rarely merely a passive bystander to Haiti's ongoing turmoil. In effect, Ambassador James Foley, as was the case with his recent predecessors at the Port-au-Prince post, saw his embassy as Fort Apache and the locals as restless Indians having to be kept in place by an agile embassy playmaker calling the shots. The cumulative result was

that, by February, the space left to President Aristide to politically function continued to atrophy until his position had become all but untenable.

Similarly, in Venezuela two years ago, a failed coup was hatched against President Hugo Chávez thanks to the political backing and covert funding provided by Reich, the then-chief U.S. regional policymaker. In an indisputable contravention of its Organization of American States resolutions aimed at mandating democratic legitimacy throughout the hemisphere, the United States turned out to be the lead conspirator in the destruction of Haiti's civil society. His ouster was the culmination of a U.S. foreign policy goal to eliminate or bypass Aristide, by draining him of his agenda-setting powers or, preferably, getting rid of them altogether, in order to void his inconvenient but undeniable democratic credentials.

In January, as the crisis began to mount and the political opposition became more clamorous in the streets of Port-Au-Prince, Washington's end-game strategy to resolve Haiti's political crisis began to take form. A U.S.-sanctioned international peace force would be introduced into Haiti but only to uphold a political agreement that would be fashioned between Aristide and the Port-Au-

Prince-based political opposition, led by the businessmen-dominated Group of 184.

The central credo of the latter body was to not, under any circumstance, carry on a dialogue with Aristide. And because there were to be no negotiations, there could be no agreement. But according to Powell's formula, there would be no peacekeeping initiative unless such negotiations took place and a resolution achieved.

Aristide had conceded to every demand made on him by the OAS, the European Union (especially France), the United Nations, the United States, and the English-speaking Caribbean nations to share power with the opposition, yet it was he who was repeatedly denounced by Powell and the international community for obstructionism, and rarely the opposition, which saw its vested interest intrinsically better served by chaos than peace. This was a solid strategy on the opposition's part, because it knew it lacked the popularity to win the elections that successful talks inevitably would help bring about.

Powell's thesis that a political solution must precede the arrival of a peace force was indefensible on grounds of logic. A peace force would be much more relevant while violence was occurring and the gov-

ernment was dangerously tottering, rather than after a peace agreement had been achieved. Brazil, Canada, Chile, France and for that matter, the United Nations and the OAS, signed on to Powell's diktat strategy of taking no action until it was too late to save Haitian democracy. Powell blamed Aristide for dilly-dallying; however, it was he who purposefully used up the Aristide government's precious remaining moments with inaction, even though there was time enough for the United States to demonstrate it meant to guarantee continued democratic rule.

Mexico's silence over Haiti on the eve of President Vicente Fox's visit to the Bush family ranch was sadly understandable, given the Mexican leader's forlorn quest for U.S. immigration reform. But the silence of the region's other heavy hitters was incomprehensible. One would expect languorous behavior from an already discredited OAS Secretary General César Gaviria, or from President Ricardo Lagos of Chile, whose military (which he is dispatching to Haiti) under General Augusto Pinochet routinely tortured and murdered anyone with a radical agenda similar to Aristide's. Meanwhile, Brazil's Lula de Silva was also preparing his troop contingents, while Argentina's Nestor

Timeline of Critical Events in Haiti

1804 Inspired by the tenacious and tireless efforts of Toussaint L'Ouverture, slaves declared Haiti as the first free black republic after driving out Napoleon's forces.

1888 The United States responds to seizure by Haitian authorities of a U.S. ship that docked illegally in a Haitian port, thus beginning its habit of intervention.

1914 Woodrow Wilson initiates a U.S. military intervention with the deployment of Marines to Haiti. The purpose was "to maintain order during the period of chronic and threatened insurrection."

1934 Franklin Delano Roosevelt terminates the U.S. intervention program by entrusting all executive responsibilities to a small but unruly clique.

1956 Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier stages a military coup and declares himself president for life. He heavily relies upon the Tontons Macoutes, a Haitian Praetorian Guard, in order to enforce his reign.



Kirchner chose to sit out of the controversy. Neither bothered to comment on comment on Powell's preposterous formulations.

Canada's new prime minister, Paul Martin, intent on improving relations with Washington, signed on to Powell's formula for all-but-guaranteeing Aristide's eventual ouster, never mind that such a policy ill-served his country's reputation for having a less patronizing attitude toward the rest of the hemisphere. Ottawa's supine accommodation to Powell's elusive timetable for intervention was pathetic, in that the governing Liberal Party had not allowed its police trainers to remain in Haiti long enough back in 1994-96 to adequately professionalize the country's security force.

At the end of the day, standing almost alone, Jamaica's Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, upheld the region's honor by implicitly rebuking the timidity of other hemisphere leaders, in spite of the vulnerability of Jamaica's sagging economy and its need for Washington's financial backing.

Aside from Powell, the world leader most deserving of derision is French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin. The French diplomat at first boldly confronted the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti by calling for urgent action to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in the country, but he then em-

braced Powell's thesis that a political solution must precede dispatching any peace forces.

U.S. Embassy authorities were able to thrust a resignation letter into an understandably-befuddled Aristide's hands for him to sign. This was done under the implicit threat that only then could he and his family be flown out of the country to safety. Once airborne, Aristide was told that his ultimate destination would be the Central African Republic only a half-hour before his scheduled landing. He was denied any ability to communicate with the outside world. Nor was he told where he would be going during a four-hour layover. Such behavior exemplifies the utter contempt in which he was held by U.S. officials. Powell's defense of this scenario was based on his now revised line that Aristide was a "flawed" president who brought on his own downfall.

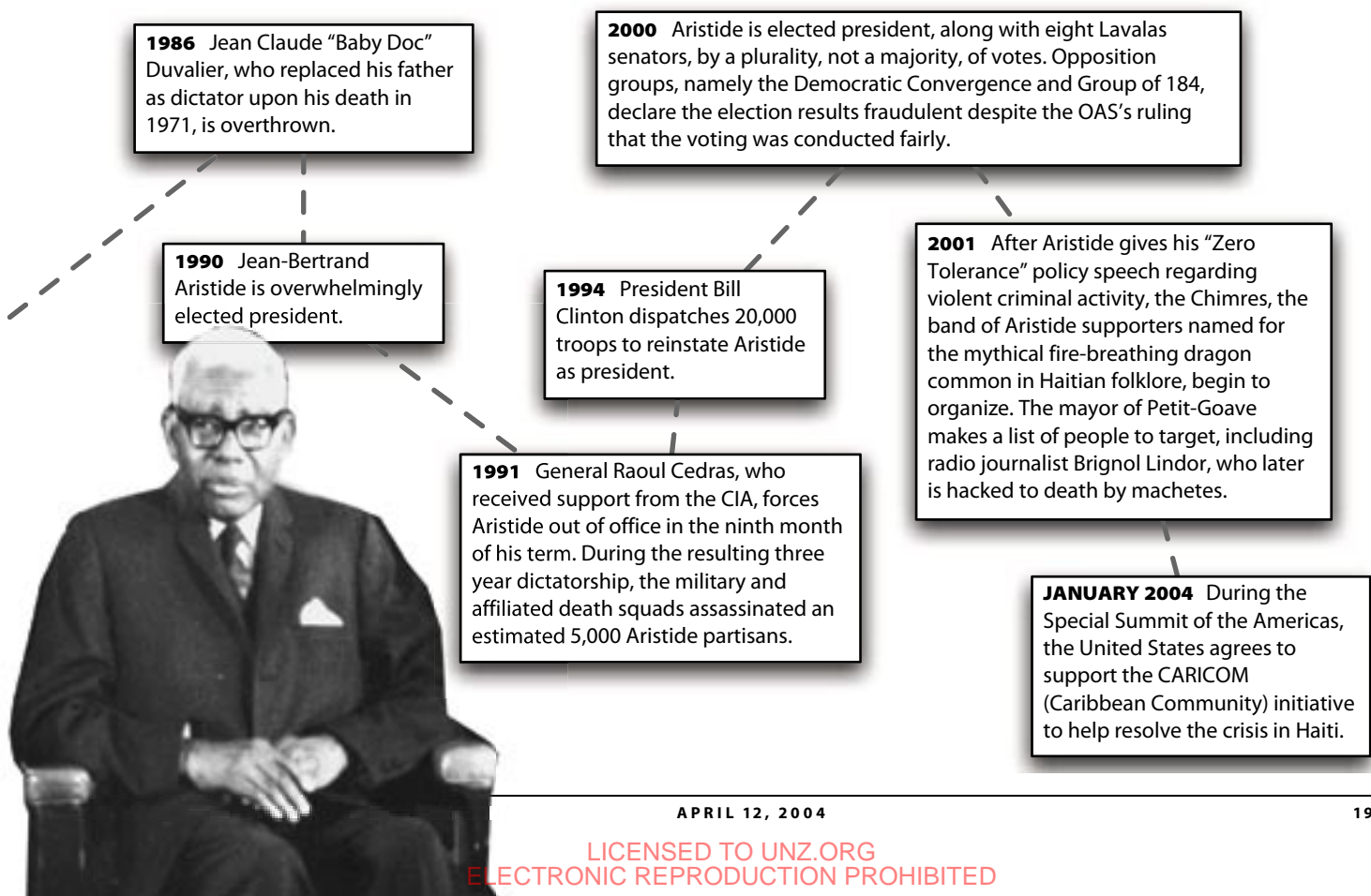
Today Haiti is a horrific mess, but it can't entirely be attributed to President Aristide's "flawed performance." If Aristide was flawed, it was largely due to the impossible conditions laid down by Washington for him to rule.

Powell had exacerbated Haiti's last three years of strife and misery by caving into Noreiga and Reich's Miami-bred zealotry and accepting their interpretation of events.

He supported the continued freeze of \$500 million in multilateral assistance to Haiti based on the exaggerations and distortion of what took place in the May 2000 senate elections, when Aristide was not president. Again, as he repeatedly had done in Iraq, Powell presented the American public with an entirely false picture of what caused Haiti's political and economic difficulties.

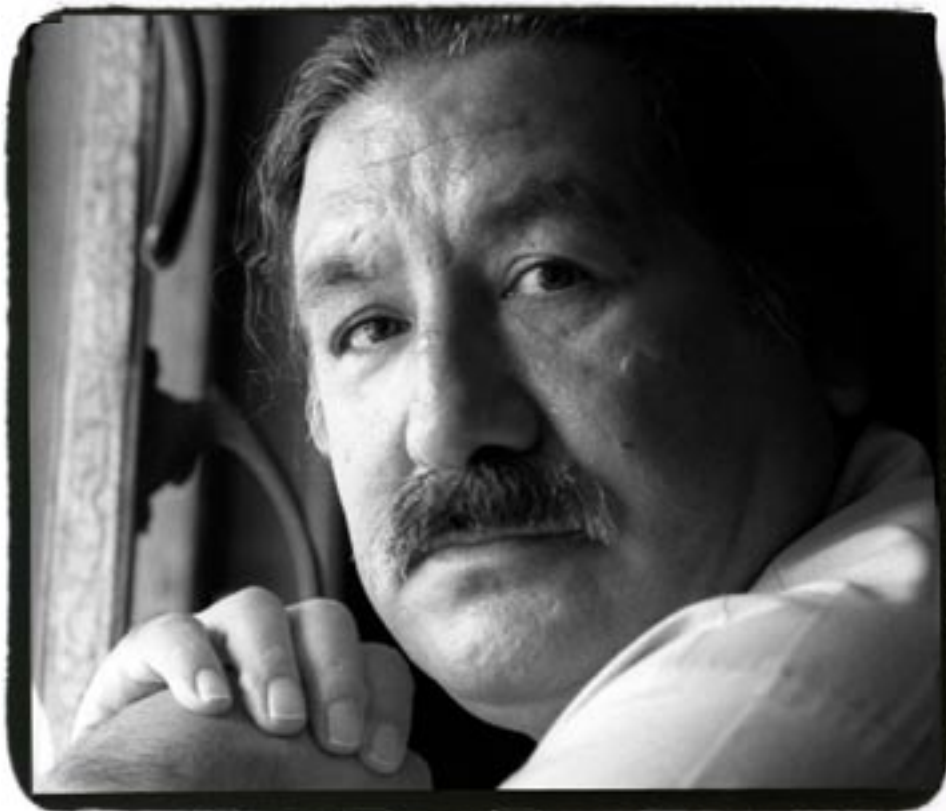
There is no disputing that the extremism and mean-spirited nature of Washington's Haitian policy prevented democratic practices from taking root on the island. Secretary of State Powell must be condemned for sponsoring a strategy that was superficial, illogical, narrowly conceptualized and damaging both to the U.S. national interest and Haiti's most basic needs. The kind of human misery that has propelled tens of thousands of Haitians over the past decade to risk their lives trying to reach south Florida is not likely to be assuaged by forcing Haiti into a political process when it lacks popular natural leaders and when there are no reasons for the citizenry to trust their new U.S.-imposed officials. ■

LARRY BIRNS is director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, www.coha.org. COHA Research Associate Jill Shelly assisted with this article.



The Truth About Leonard

BY DAN FROSCH



WHEN KA-MOOK NICHOLS, A prominent former member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), testified last month that fellow activist Leonard Peltier bragged of shooting two FBI agents in cold blood, her words echoed throughout Indian country and beyond.

For the last 27 years, Peltier has languished in federal prison, convicted of killing those agents during a shootout on South Dakota's Pine Ridge reservation in 1975, much to the outrage of an international movement that believes he was framed. The incident occurred during a tumultuous period of violence between AIM, an Indian rights group working to improve conditions for Pine Ridge's impoverished residents, and a corrupt local tribal government backed by the FBI.

Now, Peltier's involvement in that crime is coming under renewed scrutiny as a result of Nichols' allegations. Nichols was appearing as a witness at the trial of a former AIM security guard named Arlo Looking Cloud, accused of murdering legendary AIM activist Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash in 1976. (Looking Cloud was eventually convicted, and another former AIM security guard charged with her murder, John Graham, awaits extradition from Canada.) Equally shocking was her subsequent testimony that implied Peltier also might have

been involved in Pictou-Aquash's killing.

Peltier is serving two life sentences for killing the FBI agents. He admitted to participating in the gun battle but adamantly denied prosecutors' claims that he executed Special Agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams as they lay wounded. And virtually from the day of his conviction, a group of activists, politicians and celebrities have demanded his release, citing the unclear circumstances surrounding the shooting, the sham trial that ensued and the government's abhorrent treatment of AIM and the Indians it was trying to empower.

Strong denials

But Nichols' revelations have shocked many close to the case.

Specifically, she stated that in the months following the shooting, Peltier, speaking to Pictou-Aquash and her, said of one of the FBI agents, "The motherfucker was begging for his life, but I shot him anyway." With regard to Pictou-Aquash, whom some AIM leaders mistakenly believed was an FBI informant, Nichols said Peltier told her "he believed she was a fed and that he was going to get some truth serum and give it to her so that she would tell the truth."

Reaction from Peltier's supporters to both allegations has been swift and emotional.

On February 7, Peltier's lawyer Barry Ba-

chrach released a statement decrying the testimony of "paid informants"—Nichols conceded taking \$42,000 from the feds for moving expenses because she feared retribution—and three days later Peltier stated that hearing her words was "like being stabbed in the heart."

Robert Robideau, Peltier's first cousin and an international spokesman for the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, says he knows for certain Peltier didn't execute the FBI agents because he was there. (In 1976, with Peltier still on the run, Robideau and fellow AIM activist Dino Butler were both acquitted of murdering Coler and Williams.)

"It's totally false. I was one of the three individuals that was the first to be by the side of the FBI agents," said Robideau, who added Peltier was not with him. "I cannot deny that these agents were shot in the head at close range but they were not executed. They were killed in the heat of passion and they died like warriors. These were two armed groups fighting each other for different reasons."

As for the murder of Pictou-Aquash, Robideau insists any allegations of Peltier's involvement are "ludicrous," because, he says, Peltier was close friends with Pictou-Aquash and didn't get along with the faction of AIM that wanted her dead.

Acclaimed author Peter Matthiessen, who defends Peltier in his 1983 book *In The Spirit*

of *Crazy Horse*, also thinks Nichols' testimony is suspicious. "Leonard is suing the parole board right now and there's a lot of talk about a movie. I think the [government] will use anything to block his parole. I've always said the situation was murky and very excitable and that somebody either through panic or calculated judgment said 'Jesus, we can't let these guys live,' but that the FBI acknowledged long ago that it had no idea who that person or persons were."

Contrary evidence

But Nichols, even by Matthiessen's account, was a well-respected member of AIM, and she is hardly alone in her revelations about Peltier.

Noted Indian journalist Paul DeMain spent years defending Peltier and AIM through his newspaper articles but changed his position in 2002. His stunning shift was the result of his own investigations and the numerous people with knowledge about the case who he says came forward and implicated Peltier.

In late February of that year, on the heels of extensive interviews with his sources, DeMain published a series of stories in the paper he edits, *News From Indian Country*, alleging Peltier killed the two FBI agents and was privy to the hit on Pictou-Aquash. Peltier last year sued him for libel but DeMain expects the suit to be dismissed given Nichols' testimony.

DeMain now reveals that Nichols was one

of those who first contacted him and told him what she knew. He recalls, "When Ka-Mook told me that Peltier had gone into this dramatic reenactment of what happened, using body language and flashbacks, and how she and Anna Mae sat there spellbound and didn't say a damn word through the whole thing. ... When I first heard Ka-Mook tell me this, it flipped my whole world upside down."

DeMain, torn about exposing a figure and a movement he long defended and haunted by Pictou-Aquash's death, says he believes there has been "some realignment going on" among Native Americans who have backed Peltier. "If you look at who's supporting him—Peter Matthiessen, Barry Bachrach—it's all these white guys who just won't let him go. He does still have some native people around him who've been essential in building up this myth about who he is."

Harlan McKosato, host of the syndicated radio show "Native America Calling" that devoted several shows to the Pictou-Aquash killing earlier this year, echoes DeMain's sentiment about a change in opinion. "There is a segment of Native Americans who were indifferent but tended to side with Peltier. These people are now being swayed by the new evidence and what seems to be a loss of AIM's credibility."

Karen Testerman, a fellow journalist, who grew up on Pine Ridge during the '70s, also called for Peltier's release but changed her mind after trusted sources on the reser-

vation told her what they knew. "It was like running into glass door you thought wasn't there. It was heartbreaking. When I told my 61-year-old mother, she took her 'Free-Peltier' poster off the wall and wept."

Both sides wait

One thing appears certain: With Graham's extradition likely to occur, pending a March 29 extradition hearing, more information undoubtedly will emerge.

On March 3, a few days after speaking with *In These Times*, Robideau resigned as international spokesman for the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee because of the organization's continued support of Graham—despite Robideau's strong belief that Graham is lying about his involvement in Pictou-Aquash's death and should be extradited.

"I won't be a party to the LPDC or to Leonard if he is not going to condemn these people," Robideau said. "This resignation does not change my position as to the innocence of Leonard in regards to the killing of the agents or the death of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash."

Whether the whole truth about Peltier, Pictou-Aquash and a movement that seemed to lose its way is not just revealed but accepted remains to be seen. ■

DAN FROSCH is an award-winning journalist based in New York whose work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Source* and the *Santa Fe Reporter*.



FEBRUARY 27, 1973 A large group of AIM activists take over the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation, demanding improved civil rights for Indians. The standoff between AIM and local and federal authorities lasts more than two months.

JUNE 26, 1975 A shootout between the FBI and AIM members occurs on the Jumping Bull property on Pine

Wounded Knee Timeline

Ridge. AIM activist Joe Stuntz and FBI Special Agents Jack Coler and Ron Williams are killed. AIM activists, among them Leonard Peltier, flee the scene.

FEBRUARY 6, 1976 Peltier is arrested in Canada and eventually charged with the deaths of the two FBI agents, pending extradition.

FEBRUARY 24, 1976 Well-known AIM member Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash is found dead in a ravine on Pine Ridge, shot in the head.

JULY 16, 1976 AIM members Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, also charged with killing Coler and Williams,

are acquitted.

DECEMBER 16, 1976 Peltier is extradited from Vancouver to Rapid City, S.D.

APRIL 18, 1977 Peltier is convicted of murdering the agents and sentenced to two life terms.

NOVEMBER 3, 1999 Former AIM leader Russell Means announces that he believes AIM leaders Clyde and Vernon Bellecourt ordered Pictou-Aquash's death because they thought she was an informant.

FEBRUARY 2002 *News From Indian Country* runs the first in a series of stories that alleges Peltier shot the two FBI agents and might have known that Pictou-Aquash

was going to be murdered.

MARCH 2003 *News From Indian Country* runs an interview with Peltier with additional comments by DeMain reiterating the editor's stance.

MARCH 20, 2003 Former AIM security guards Arlo Looking Cloud and John Graham are indicted in the killing of Pictou-Aquash.

MAY 2, 2003 Peltier sues *News From Indian Country* editor Paul DeMain for libel.

FEBRUARY 6, 2004 Arlo Looking Cloud is found guilty in the murder of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash.

MARCH 29, 2004 Extradition hearing scheduled for John Graham.

ALL AGAINST ONE

BY DAVID MOBERG · BAL HARBOUR, FLORIDA

FOR DAN RADFORD, HEAD OF the Cincinnati Central Labor Council, the presidential campaign started last fall, long before Democrats had a nominee. And it will continue unabated throughout the year with more resources, more determination, more unity and a greater variety of tactics than ever before.

Reflecting the national labor movement's strategy and resolve, Radford's work in his crucial battleground state is based in a profound fear of Bush's reelection—a fear that already is producing glimmers of hope.

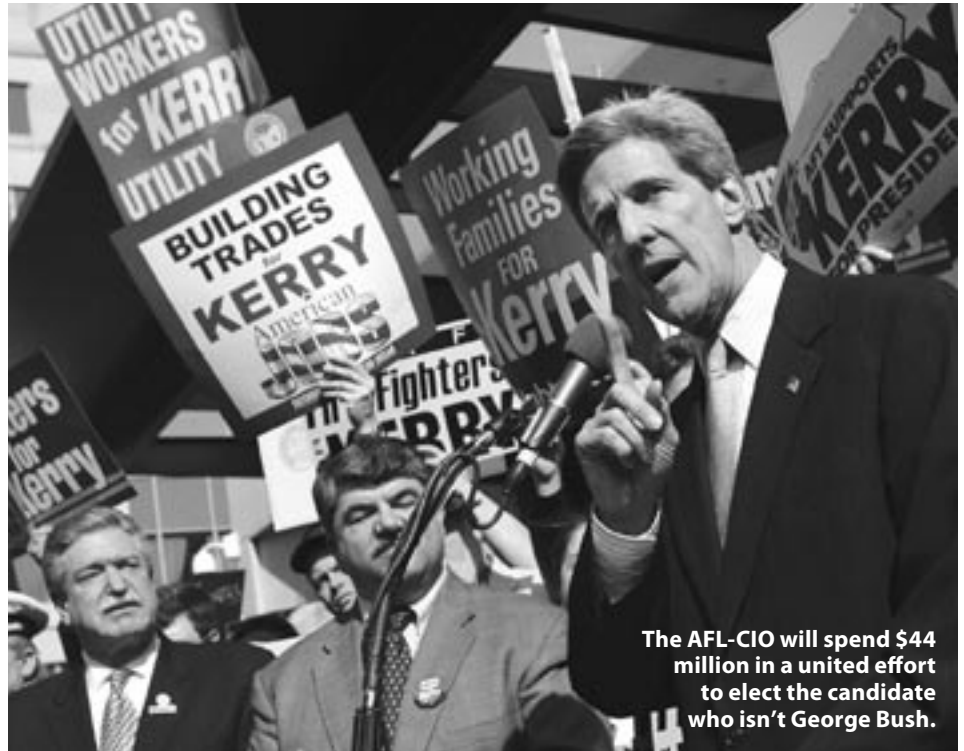
"Working families are frightened of this administration for several reasons," said Radford. "You take the issue of overtime [which could be eliminated for 8 million workers under new Bush administration rules]. They see their safety net being eroded. And they're more attuned to foreign policy. They're frightened about what's happening in Iraq."

Although Bush will try to win conservative areas of Ohio, like Cincinnati, with social wedge issues, labor there is keeping workers focused on kitchen-table issues, such as the loss of jobs, the shift of manufacturing and white-collar jobs overseas, and the growing healthcare crisis. But Radford's local labor movement also is strongly backing an initiative to overturn Cincinnati's unique ban on laws protecting gay rights.

Besides starting earlier, labor will have more than three times as many outside organizers working in Cincinnati, and members are being mobilized to campaign in their workplaces and in their neighborhoods. A pilot project of the AFL-CIO's Working America—recruiting nonunion households who share labor's general policy goals—already has signed up 35,000 local members. Other new voter education and registration efforts, such as America Coming Together, have labor support and complement union political activity. The work already has paid off, with a victory in a suburban mayoral race. "I'm more hopeful now than six months ago," he said. "I talked it then. I feel it now."

The determination and muted optimism were evident when the AFL-CIO Executive Council gathered in Florida in March. For working people, there is a crisis in jobs, healthcare, education, retirement security and future economic prospects, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said.

"During this crisis, Bush has been AWOL," Sweeney charged. "Bush has been the worst president for working people in recent memory. He has favored giant corporations over working families at every turn."



But that anger, combined with labor's early, sophisticated and targeted political program, Sweeney said, can help unions play a critical role in John Kerry's election bid.

Refining the focus

In the 2000 elections, labor households accounted for 26 percent of voters (36 percent in Ohio, which Gore narrowly lost after pulling his campaign out of Ohio in the last few weeks). That clout was the result of AFL-CIO efforts since Sweeney took office to boost registration, educate members on issues and get voters to the polls. This year labor is refining its program with a new focus on swing union voters—those who may shift parties or are vulnerable to Republican social issue pitches (on guns or gays, for example). Such members will be among many union members who regularly receive communication "sandwiches"—phone calls from union volunteers, followed by mailings, followed by calls discussing the mailing. The union pitch on economic issues makes a difference. Firefighters President Harold Schaitberger, the major early labor backer of Kerry, said that even though 44 percent of his members identify as Republican, roughly 62 percent to 64 percent have backed union-supported Democrats in recent elections. Already this year, he said, union political education had boosted Kerry support among members by nearly 15 percentage points.

This sophistication and the campaign's early start, will be backed

up by a more sustained effort. Union leaders at the executive council approved a special assessment that should bring in an additional \$6.5 million for political work this year, boosting AFL-CIO spending to at least \$44 million, an increase of several million from 2000. In addition, individual unions will be spending even larger amounts both mobilizing their members and supporting candidates. The Service Employees Union (SEIU), for example, plans special assessments that will raise \$60 million for political work, three times the union's expenditure in 2000, in addition to contributions from members to the union political fund—an anticipated \$11 million that can be used for candidate contributions or broader political work. Many unions also are more aggressively recruiting members for volunteer work. SEIU will pay 2004 “hero” volunteers to leave their jobs and spend from two to six months working in the 16 battleground states.

“This will be the single largest effort of any single organization other than a political party,” SEIU President Andrew Stern said of his union's effort.

Show Us the Jobs

Labor's campaign, which also targets state and congressional races, will attempt to frame the issues of the election. At the top of the list is the Bush administration's jobs record, which at this stage is by far the No. 1 voting issue, according to a CBS poll in late February. Starting in late March, the AFL-CIO plans to take 51 workers who have lost jobs on a tour of key Midwestern states on a Show Us the Jobs Tour.

The Bush administration record—nearly 3 million jobs lost and continued anemic job growth despite other signs of economic recovery—is closely tied to another top issue with voters: the export of jobs overseas. Peter Hart Research *continued on page 30*

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Robert Downey Jr. shows the Hasty Pudding club how bad a bad girl can be.

BY KELLY KLEIMAN

Doing Women Wrong?

The musical *Hairspray*, playing on Broadway for the past two years and now on tour, is about race relations and the growth of tolerance in 1962 Baltimore. It won a Tony Award for Best Musical, and its leading lady took home the award for Best Lead

Actress in a Musical. More notably, Harvey Fierstein won Best Lead Actor for portraying the leading lady's mother.

A man winning plaudits for portraying a woman raises a few questions: Why do we celebrate performance in drag? Isn't drag just yet another variation on a dominant group appropriating the identity of a disempowered group for its own ends?

As Erika Munk pointed out in 1985 in *The Village Voice*, "Most men in drag are no more subversive than whites in blackface were. The more women fight for autonomy, the less helpful become restatements of stereotype which have lost their critical edge and turned into means of putting women down and aside." Maybe blackface is considered an insult and drag acceptable because of some inherent difference between

them—or maybe just because no one has yet brought to bear on drag the kind of analysis that sent blackface to its unmourned death.

I should be clear that by "drag," I mean men dressing as women in public performance. The problem here is not displays of pride in being gay or the sexual meanings people assign to clothing—but the theft of female identity, the transfer from women to men of the power to represent publicly what a woman is supposed to be. In discussing drag, we talk about challenging the audience's conception of gender, or recovering the male performer's sense of the feminine. But what about those of us being impersonated? What will it take to develop that sense of shock when a man portrays Lady Bracknell?

From *Mrs. Doubtfire* to *La Cage aux Folles*, from cross-dresser balls in Harlem to Hasty Pudding theatricals at Harvard University, drag represents institutionalized male hostility toward women on a spectrum that runs from prescription of desired behavior to ridicule. Such drag is not used exclusively for comedic effect. Scholar Judith Butler took the lead in distinguishing glamor drag, primarily for gay audiences, from comic drag, whose affronts she dismissed as “high het[erosexual] entertainment.”

And what’s so funny about drag, anyway? Maybe it’s the simple incongruity: You can always knock ‘em dead with chest hair pouring out of the cleavage of an evening gown. But this seems like a pretty thin joke on which to hang years of amusement. Unless you believe the differences in gender behavior are huge and immutable, the contrast doesn’t hold much interest.

Certainly, the contrast between white performers and black characters was not enough in and of itself to make blackface funny. There had to be something else. And there was—ridicule of African Americans. In his 1974 book *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America*, Robert C. Toll pointed out that performance in blackface descended to full-scale stereotyping aimed at the supposed incompetence of blacks just as they were gaining their freedom and becoming a threat to poor whites. Perhaps the popularity of drag today is due less to gay liberation than to the women’s movement, and the economic threat women pose to men.

Whatever the reasons, men who dress up as women and adopt stereotyped feminine behaviors are comical because of their stereotyped behavior, and the inference the audience is encouraged to draw is not that stereotypes are comical but that women are.

Drag and blackface even feature similar insulting stereotypes. Toll identifies Zip Coon (an urban dandy out of his depth) and Sambo (a shuffling rural fool), the first making fun of black people for being free and the second for being slaves. Butler divides drag into the Glamor Girl (think RuPaul in sequins) and the Pantomime Dame (think Milton Berle in high heels), the first making fun of women for their sexuality and the second for their lack of it.

The point of glamor drag—the “that can’t be a boy in the evening gown” effect—is to exaggerate the iconic feminine. But the only reason to hire a man for this purpose, when there are plenty of women available (by definition more experienced and better qualified) is to give men the continued right to show women how they are expected to act.

Holly Brubach explores this in her sympathetic portrait of drag queens *Girlfriend: Men, Women and Drag*, writing “What impressed me about drag . . . was that it articulates men’s idea of women . . . The men I found who dress in drag most often become babes if not outright bimbos, bearing little resemblance to the ideal most women have set for themselves.” Even those men who intend their performance as a tribute to women—the ones they love or the ones they wish they were—are presumptuously getting in our light.

Both Butler and Esther Newton, in her book *Mother Camp*, claim drag as a badge of gay pride, but this is ahistorical. Female impersonation was the big hit act in 19th Century mainstream vaudeville and didn’t become publicly associated with gay men until Mae West linked the two in her 1928 piece *Pleasure Man*. Though gay men performing in drag as hypersexualized females can be seen as an effort to take the stigma of effeminacy and invert it, that doesn’t protect it from the

complaint that it insults women.

Butler and literary scholar Marjorie Garber defend drag by claiming that the practice undermines gender stereotypes by underscoring the idea that all gender is a performance. Though this argument begins soundly enough with its skepticism about definitions of “natural” womanhood, it goes off the rails in asserting there’s no such thing as a “woman” and that therefore one may claim womanhood on any basis, including possession of an evening gown. Put it this way: If there’s no such thing as “woman,” who is being paid 73 cents on the dollar? It’s not men in drag, I assure you.

J.J. Allen, in *The Man in the Red Velvet Dress*, suggests that dressing across gender lines is an equal opportunity sport, that “if

men and women are to achieve true equality, everything should be up for grabs: miniskirts, boxer shorts . . .” But women who dress as men are dressing up, seeking power or privilege. Onstage they’re often seeking leading roles (Dame Edith Evans as Hamlet); on the street they’re seeking immunity from the routine insults with which women dressed as women daily cope.

Men dressing as women are dressing down. Masters making fun of slaves, or at most making fun of themselves, do not equal slaves poking fun at masters. Humor is what masters get in addition to power, and what slaves get instead of it. ■

KELLY KLEIMAN writes regularly for the Chicago Reader, the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine and the Wall Street Journal.

ART SPACE



This untitled piece by Mac McGill is part of “Drawing Resistance,” an exhibit of work by 31 artists/activists organized by Wisconsin artists Sue Simensky and Nicolas Lampert. The exhibit, scheduled through 2005, has so far travelled over 5,000 miles to 20 cities. Information about artists and scheduled showings is available at www.drawingresistance.org.

BY PAUL MCLEARY

Mind the Gap

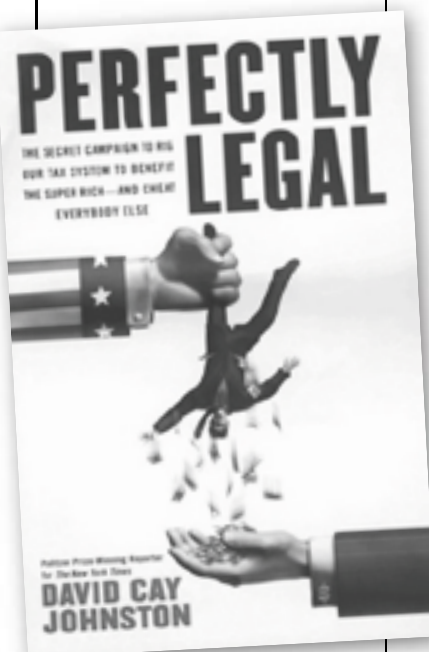
Americans have had a long, uncertain history with taxation. A full national income tax wasn't established until 1862, and it was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court 34 years later. In 1913 the 16th

Amendment to the Constitution permitted the income tax to be made a permanent fixture in the U.S. tax system.

For years, taxes generally were aimed at the wealthy as a way to ensure a measure of equality, but in the second half of the 20th Century this concept was turned on its head as the wealthy invented schemes to exempt themselves from these federal levies. As David Cay Johnston points out in *Perfectly Legal*, this trend intensified in the last 30 years and American families and the middle class have seen their average income stagnate as their tax burden has risen. At the same time the wealthy keep making more money while paying less and less of their yearly earnings to the government. And it's all done by the books.

Johnston fingers two culprits, the Social Security tax and the Alternate Minimum Tax, as the two most telling examples of how the tax burden has shifted onto the shoulders of middle-income Americans. Social Security has become, in recent years, the primary tax paid by most Americans. The maximum has climbed sharply, from \$327 in 1970 to

about \$4,700 in 2003, while median income for Americans has climbed only from \$36,573 to \$40,330 between 1970 and 1999. The tax caps out at \$87,000, meaning anyone earning more pays the same rate. In other words, a married couple earning a combined income of \$87,000 pays the same amount of Social Security tax as, oh, say, Bill Gates. Not a bad



deal for Gates.

Speaking of bad deals, many don't fare better when it comes to the Alternative Minimum

Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich—and Cheat Everybody Else

By David Cay Johnston
Penguin Group
352 pages, \$25.95

Tax (AMT). Introduced in 1969 as a separate tax system aimed at wealthy tax dodgers, it recalculates the value of a taxpayer's exemptions and deductions, charging whatever is more. Unfortunately, the tax doesn't take into account increases in interest rates, so now many of those making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 are being added to the rolls of the AMT. About 3 million are expected to get hit this year, and if the Bush tax cuts become permanent that number will jump to more than 35 million by 2010. Families making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will see their share of this tax jump from 3 cents per dollar to 21 cents per dollar over the next few years, while those making more than \$1 million will see their share dip by 3 cents to 19 cents per dollar.

The irony here is that last year's tax cut lowered the tax rates on most capital gains and dividends to 15 percent, and taxes paid on investments are not subject to the AMT. The upshot? The wealthy now get out of paying this one, too.

But I can throw figures at you all day, and in the end the fact that last year the average income of the country's top 400 earners was \$174 million is just that—a fact. Over the past four years Bush policies have slashed taxes for the wealthy while stealthily sticking it to the middle and upper-middle classes. As a former *New York Times* reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner, Johnston knows how to dig up sources and lay out the facts, but keeping an engaging narrative going for 300-plus pages is a different story. The book is a policy wonk's dream, and there's enough here to make you pull out your hair over the amount of graft and outright cheating going on in the open. But the repetition of numbers, data, charts (some of which may be a bit selective in their sources), and newspaper-style prose becomes dreary after awhile, and the reader longs for a break from the steady diet of bad news Johnston forces them to digest.

That said, *Perfectly Legal* is important in a way that many other screeds only wish to be, and, in an easily perfectible world, would serve as a rallying cry for tax reform. The fleecing of the American taxpayer is an issue that cuts to the very heart of our democracy, and deserves the single-minded attention of our greatest policymakers. But the reality is that those in charge of making the changes are too busy courting the corporations and wealthy individuals who benefit most from their anti-democratic sleights of hand. ■

PAUL MCLEARY is a writer in Brooklyn, N.Y.



BY KEVIN CANFIELD

Shades of Grey

To a nation of kids, Grey De Lisle is bigger than Britney. A chatty 30-year-old Californian, De Lisle is one of the more successful cartoon voiceover artists working today. She has played characters on children's TV staples

like "Fairly Odd Parents," "What's New, Scooby Doo?" and the "Powerpuff Girls."

Strangely enough, De Lisle also is a remarkably good singer of old-time country songs, a skill she demonstrates on her heartbreakingly beautiful new record, *The Graceful Ghost*.

De Lisle's day job would seem to have little to do with her singing career, but that is not the case at all. In fact, it is her work in cartoons that has liberated her from the commercial pressures that so often weigh down potentially great musicians.

"It takes the commerce out of music making," De Lisle said in a recent interview. "I don't go into the studio and think, 'Oh, I have to make a hit.' I don't think about radio, I don't think about

Grey De Lisle The Graceful Ghost

whether people are going to buy it or whether the record company is even going to like it. The cartoons really take the money factor out of everything."

The Graceful Ghost, De Lisle's fourth album, will not land her on MTV and it will not put a platinum record on her wall. But in its charming guilelessness, its unabashed reverence for traditional country music and its sepia-tinged balladry, it is surely one of the best records of the year thus far.

Backed by a band that includes her husband Murry Hammond, a member of country rock band The Old

97's, De Lisle sings songs about broken-hearted folks, working-class woes and families who've lost loved ones. Sometimes she nods in the direction of turn-of-the-century spirituals. Elsewhere, she proves herself a true devotee of country legends like the Carter Family, Loretta Lynn and Marty Robbins.

"On a cold November evening 'cross the bitter plains we ran," she sings on a song called "Sharecroppin' Man." "Far from that ol' shotgun in our copper wedding bands."

Said De Lisle: "This has always been a part of my musical upbringing and my mental musical roots. Every third song I would write would be one of these old-time songs."

De Lisle plays a small

stringed instrument called an autoharp, but it is her voice that makes this a memorable record. Over the course of the record's 12 songs and 36 minutes, she never makes a vocal misstep. Whether inhabiting the role of a bereft bride or luckless drunk, she imbues each song with a vulnerability that is altogether irresistible.

This is De Lisle's first album for Nashville-based Sugar Hill Records, but unlike the vast majority of contemporary artists, she says her goal was not to land a record deal.

"I was really afraid of a label," De Lisle said. "I was really afraid that they were going to tell me what type of record to make. I just had this picture of fat men in suits who listen to Britney Spears all day."

But Sugar Hill assuaged her concerns and allowed De Lisle to make her album without interference. The result is an honest record that is as compelling as it is decidedly uncommercial.

"Money and music have nothing to do with each other," she said. "The money has no business being next to the music."

Some of De Lisle's musical peers have suggested that she quit her cartoon work and concentrate on music. But it is the cartoons that have freed her to the point where she can sing whatever songs she wants. And why should she have to pick one or the other? Look at June Carter Cash, says De Lisle: She trained with famed acting coach Lee Strasberg and also managed to have a great singing career. So what's to say that it can't be the same for De Lisle?

"I hope I never have to quit anything," she said. "I love acting just as much as I love music. I just feel like if you're an artist, you're an artist, no matter what you choose to do at any moment." ■

KEVIN CANFIELD writes regularly on music for *In These Times*.



BY PATRICIA AUFDERHEIDE

The Untold Tales

When Naima married Hatem, she expected to leave the tragic past behind in East Jerusalem. She never thought her Chicago husband would become an activist like her brother—the one who paid with his life.

José has the chance of a lifetime, recruited by the Dodgers. But as we watch him kiss his third girlfriend goodbye in the Dominican Republic, we already know that he's got more on his mind than baseball.

At home, Barine worries that her twin teenage girls are in danger of losing their Nigerian heritage. On the school bus, though, Nina and Zina chafe under the teasing and finger-pointing about their foreign accents and clothes.

The New Americans, an extraordinary new TV mini-series, lets us in on these stories and several more besides. Executive produced by Steve James, Gordon Quinn and Peter Gilbert of Kartemquin Films (the company that made *Hoop Dreams*) and directed by seven award-winning directors, the series captures viewers and spins tales that are all the more engrossing because they're true. It debuts on the PBS series *Independent Lens*—a series that one critic

The New Americans 8-9 p.m., March 29-31, PBS

aptly called the TV version of an independent bookstore—on March 29, 30 and 31.

The series is masterfully executed. Kartemquin has been an incubator for dozens of artists and projects over the years—*Hoop Dreams*, *Refrigerator Mothers*, *Stevie* and *Golub* among them. It was founded in the '60s by Quinn and others to tell real people's stories, in ways that could change American society. Kartemquin filmmakers cultivate enormous patience, following subjects over long periods (in the case of *Hoop Dreams*, some six years). Their work is imbued with profound respect for both the subject and the viewer. The filmmakers win the trust of their subjects, capturing remarkable moments of intimacy and self-revelation. The finished work also features

powerful storytelling skills and elegant editing. So the viewers get lived experience, inside the same envelope of trust that bonds maker and subject.

The New Americans takes us inside lives that are very easy to miss altogether: those of the 56 million first-generation Americans. You may know that behind the stolid face of the busboy, foodworker and hotel maid there's a story. In *The New Americans*, you find it out. Chef's assistant Barine, the sister of slain Nigerian human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, used to own a catering business herself. Kansas meat-packer Pedro Flores has six children and a wife in Mexico and a dream—one it will be harder than he can imagine to fulfill—to reunite his family. Silicon Valley computer worker Anjan Bacchu is torn between his Gandhian father's ardent wish for him to return to India and the hope of work in the wreckage of the dot.com era.

Because the mini-series launches each of their stories in their home countries, we meet these people before they become immigrants, before they lose the social skin of their own culture. We see the mourning for what's lost that suffuses their entry, a grief almost invisible to those efficiently trying to help them adapt to the new. And we want to know what happens, because these aren't living exemplars of issues but people who bring all their skills and problems to surviving the destruction of former lives and the piecing together of new ones. Sometimes you want to reach into the TV and stop them from making the choices they do (like I did when the Flores family moved). Sometimes you feel like joining the celebration (like I did when Ngozi got her nursing assistant's certificate).

Public television execs saw the power of these stories early on—the Independent Television Service funded it, after initial funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Public TV Web sites now make it possible for viewers like us to make *The New Americans* a topic for a book club-like session and to share recipes and our own stories (at pbs.org/newamericans). ITVS's outreach Web site (itvs.org/outreach/newamericans) gets deeper, into short versions of the series for discussion, teachers' guides and lesson plans, including materials for teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It even lets you find out who has already organized an event in your state just by clicking on a map.

The New Americans has become more than a mini-series. It's a great example of the power of storytelling to spur insights, to bring people together, and to make change. It's the kind of programming that saves the reputation of public TV. ■



The 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, proudly salute *In These Times* for 27 years of speaking out on behalf of working people everywhere.



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reported that polling in battleground states showed that a bit more than half of all voters worry very often about jobs moving overseas (and three-fourths of swing voters say this loss of high-tech and white-collar jobs is a very serious problem).

To drive home the point, the AFL-CIO petitioned the Bush administration to take action against the Chinese government for a systematic violation of worker rights that directly undermines jobs and incomes of workers in the United States. It's the first time there has been an appeal for action on worker rights under Section 301 of the federal Trade Act, even though the option has existed since 1988. Trade deficit with China—the largest the United States has had with any country and on that is extremely lopsided (the U.S. imports five times as much from China as it exports to China)—gives credibility to the case for damages the petition outlines. At the same time, the AFL-CIO is cooperating with several business groups in another Section 301 complaint that workers (and businesses) in the United States are damaged by China's undervaluation of its currency.

"The goal is not to impose tariffs but to fix the problem," AFL-CIO trade expert Thea Lee said. "It's not anti-Chinese workers but anti-Chinese government."

Labor's 2004 political campaign also will highlight the healthcare crisis, which recently has dominated all union contract negotiations and was a central issue in the five-month southern California grocery workers strike. Although current workers preserved much of their health plan for now, they were forced to accept management's demand for a new two-tier wage pattern.

"There is not a union solution on healthcare," argued Joseph Hansen, the new president of the United Food and Commercial Workers. "It has to be a national political solution."

Despite divisions among unions over candidates in the Democratic primary, support for Kerry is universal. Also, despite the image of disarray, labor fortified with its enhanced political operations successfully influenced much of the emerging Democratic message on jobs, healthcare, trade, labor rights and other issues.

There's little doubt that the motivation to work hard exists. Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee President John Wilhelm reflected the prevailing union view: "Those Bush people are scary." ■

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False Advertising

By Kurt Vonnegut

I RECENTLY GAVE A SPEECH IN CLEVELAND. I feel so safe there. The bi-partisanship of Neo-cons working in perfect harmony with the Christian Right has made this city so safe that Cleveland's mayor is actually laying off police persons and fire fighters. There can only be one word for a community that secure: "Utopia."

So many American communities are now such Utopias that only one issue remains to be dealt with in the next presidential election: Is the United States of America for or against homosexual marriage?

I'm going to tell you some news.

No, I am not running for President, although I do know that a sentence, if it is to be complete, must have both a subject and a verb.

Nor will I confess that I sleep with children. I will say this, though: My wife is by far the oldest person I ever slept with.

Here's the news: I am going to sue the Brown and Williamson Company, manufacturers of Pall Mall cigarettes, for a billion bucks! Starting when I was only twelve years old, I have never chain-smoked anything but unfiltered Pall Malls. And for many years now, right on the package, Brown and Williamson have promised to kill me.

But I am now eighty-one and a half!!!!

Thanks a lot, you dirty rats. The last thing I ever wanted was to be alive when the three most powerful people on the whole planet would be named Bush, Dick and Colon. ■

